



Media Statement

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Reminder on need for RCDs with hand-held electrical tools

WorkSafe has issued a reminder to workplaces that residual current devices (RCDs) need to be fitted to electrical circuits wherever hand-held electrical tools are to be used.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that recent incidents investigated by WorkSafe inspectors had prompted the reminder.

“Over the past few months, inspectors have investigated two instances in regional areas of electric shocks, and in both cases RCDs had not been fitted in commercial premises,” Ms Lyhne said.

“Sadly, 12 Western Australians have died in work-related incidents involving electricity over the past five years, and this does not show any signs of improving.

“WA’s workplace safety laws require that non-portable RCDs be fitted to electrical circuits where hand-held electrical equipment is used, and building owners, property managers and tenants in commercial buildings all share the responsibility of ensuring they are installed.”

An RCD is designed to immediately switch the electricity off when a leak is detected, providing a high level of personal protection from electric shock to anyone using hand-held electrical equipment.

The person in control of the workplace has the choice of installing a fixed RCD at the switchboard to provide blanket protection for the building, or installing RCDs at selected fixed socket outlets where hand-held tools are used.

Electrocution can occur even when electricity is not at high voltage, and electrocutions have been known to happen as a result of contact with faulty electrical equipment that has become live, or via contact with worn and damaged wiring and switches.

RCDs are to be installed only by licensed electrical contractors. The Electrical Contractors Association of WA Inc can provide a list of licensed electrical contractors in local areas.



**Department of Consumer
and Employment Protection**
Government of Western Australia



“The bottom line is that people in control of workplaces need to assess all risks associated with electrical power cords, fittings, machinery and tools,” Ms Lyhne said.

“They then need to assess each hazard for the likelihood of injury and develop and implement safe work procedures that minimise the risk of workers being injured, for example installing RCDs.

“There are many different causes of electric shock and electrocution, but they all have one thing in common – they can be prevented.

“I urge anyone in control of a workplace where hand-held electrical equipment is used to install RCDs where appropriate – it may well save a life.”

Further information on electrical safety can be obtained by telephoning WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or EnergySafety on 9422.5200, or on the websites at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or www.energysafety.wa.gov.au.

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