



Electrical Industry Unite to call for parity of safety for residents of High-Rise Residential Buildings

Industry Stakeholder forum, the Electrical Safety Roundtable (ESR), charity Electrical Safety First (ESF) and Government authorised electrical Competent Person Scheme Operators NAPIT, and NICEIC have collaborated in a call for parity of electrical safety for residents of High-rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs).

The Issue and Current Level of Risk:

In England, 53% of all accidental dwelling fires are caused by an electrical source of ignition. Home Office statistics analysed by Electrical Safety First show fires caused by domestic installation faults remain consistently high despite the overall number of domestic fires decreasing over the years. This suggests that safety issues with electrical installations are not being identified or adequately tackled.

Despite the risk to life posed by electrical installations, the Building Safety Bill in its current form does not combat the disparity of electrical safety standards between residents of differing tenures within HRRBs in England.

The nature of HRRBs means that the safety of an electrical installation in one dwelling has the potential to have a life changing impact on multiple additional dwellings in proximity. This is due to the likelihood of fire spreading. As it stands, only dwellings which are privately rented are subject to legislation that mandates electrical safety checks are carried out on the electrical installation at least once every five years by a qualified and competent electrical contractor.

Whilst recommendation 188 within the Housing, Communities and Local Communities Select Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill, stated: "We recommend that the Government include supplementary provisions in the Bill for mandating regular electrical safety checks in higher-risk buildings" it was not accepted by the Government.

Further to this, the Government's response did not refer to the suggestion that this recommendation should apply to leaseholders, rather it just focused on the Social Renting White Paper and promised a consultation about enhancing electrical safety standards in the Social Rented Sector.

This disparity of electrical inspection and testing based on tenure was raised by Nick Fletcher MP during the Building Safety Debate in the House of Commons on the 10th January 2022. This issue has also been raised by Andy Slaughter MP through the tabling of two new clauses (15 and 16), discussed during the report stage of the Building Safety Bill on the 20th January 2022.

Whilst this issue is getting political attention and support from MPs, no confirmation has been received from the Government that meaningful change will happen, specifically concerning leasehold properties where the risk of faulty electrical installations does not disappear.

The Request: Amend the Building Safety Bill to require all social rented and leaseholder dwellings in HRRBs to have an electrical safety check carried out on the electrical installation at least once every five years by a qualified and competent electrical contractor.

