

# Electricity Around The Home

## TOP TIPS

- Find out where your main fuse box or consumer unit is located and how to switch off the electricity in the event of an emergency.
- Keep your main fuse box or consumer unit free from clutter.
- Regularly test your RCD protection (also known as the trip switch) specifically designed for using DIY tools or lawnmowers.
- Keep meter boxes locked and clear of obstructions.
- If you have any concerns about the safety of the electricity supply to your property or would like advice about working safely, contact your local electricity network operator.
- To find the local electricity network operator, search 'electricity distribution map' on the ENA website at [www.energynetworks.org](http://www.energynetworks.org).

Be aware of electrical equipment in and around your home. For free advice about the electrical installation inside your property, contact Electrical Safety First at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk).

In an emergency dial **999** and tell them electricity is involved.

Call **105** if you have a safety concern related to the electricity network or if you spot damage to overhead power lines, underground cables and substations that could put you, or someone else, in danger.



Energy Networks Association  
4 More London Riverside  
London SE1 2AU  
Tel +44 (0) 20 7706 5100  
[www.energynetworks.org](http://www.energynetworks.org)

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The Voice of the Networks



## Electricity Around The Home

Safety advice to the general public to be aware of electricity in and around your home.



# Electricity Around The Home

The electricity network is made up of overhead power lines, underground cables, substations and other equipment which transmits and distributes electricity from a power station to your plug. This equipment carries voltages ranging from 230 volts (domestic) up to 400,000 volts (both can be lethal). It is safe in normal conditions, but each year people are injured and even killed when they accidentally come too close to or into contact with it. So it is important you know how to stay safe.

Each property is connected to the local electricity network through a service cable. This will either enter the property underground or come from a wooden pole in your street (usually to be fixed to the eaves or chimney).

The service cable connects to a piece of equipment called the cut-out. This is commonly a small box and it contains a fuse to protect your property from a power surge. The service cable and the cut-out are the property of the electricity network operator and must not be tampered with or changed. Any damage to this equipment could risk lives.

The cable(s) from the cut-out to the meter and the meter itself are the responsibility of the supplier who sells the electricity to you. It is dangerous to tamper with or damage this cable or your meter.

Other cables will connect the meter to your fuse box. These cables, the fuse box and any wires through your house which connect up your plug sockets, lights and other electrical fixtures or equipment are your property and your responsibility. There may also be an earth wire connected between the cut-out and your fuse box. If you have one of these, it also belongs to you.

## WHAT TO KNOW

This is advice for anyone working safely around your property near overhead power lines and underground cables.

For free advice about the electrical installation inside your property, contact Electrical Safety First at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk).

Be aware of how electricity is supplied to your property, whether it is by overhead power line or underground cable and be respectful of electricity apparatus that may be near your property such as substations and surrounding buildings.

### How to avoid...

- Find out where your main fuse box or consumer unit is located and how to switch off the electricity in the event of an emergency.
- Keep your main fuse box or consumer unit free from clutter.
- Regularly test your residual current device (RCD) protection (also known as the trip switch) specifically designed for using DIY tools or lawnmowers.
- Keep meter boxes locked and clear of obstructions.
- Do not use electrical equipment when it is raining or in areas that are being watered.
- Check where cables are before digging, drilling or breaking out floors, walls and ceilings.

### Poles

Wooden poles are sometimes located on domestic property.

Take care when near poles and do not:

- Allow anyone except the electricity network operator to climb a pole.
- Assume the wires on a pole are telephone wires until the electricity network operator has confirmed it.
- Dig round the base of a pole in a way that might undermine the pole or cause it to fall.
- Fix or attach anything to a pole.
- Train any climbing plants up a pole.
- Disturb the stay wire or the pole may fall down. Some poles have stay wires to keep them upright.

### Mural wiring

Some old properties in rural areas are supplied by mural wiring which runs along the outside walls of adjacent properties, and have sometimes been painted over or covered by render so can be difficult to see.

Avoid any contact, damage, or disturbance to this wiring.

### Substations

If you have a substation located on your property it will usually be enclosed with a fence, wall or building. Do not allow anyone to enter into the substation.

If you notice any signs of damage or vandalism, contact the electricity network operator.

### Safety inside the house

- Never assume that electrical equipment is dead even if you think there has been a power cut.
- Do not remove the cut-out fuse or allow anyone working in your property to remove the cut-out fuse.
- Never move any cables, metres or cut-outs, and do not remove any wall or structure which is supporting any of them.
- Do not cover any of this equipment with clothing or other items, store heavy items on them or lean items against them.
- Avoid hitting this equipment when moving objects about.
- Do not place any flammable substances near the cut-out or meter.
- Make sure that the room or enclosure in which the cut-out or meter are located is kept dry and weather-proof. If it is outside the property in an external cupboard, keep this locked.
- If you notice that any of this equipment is damaged or overheating or you experience flickering lights, contact your electricity network operator immediately.

### Safety outside the house

Take care when resurfacing or changing levels outside. Do not assume that underground cables will be deep. Levels may have changed over the years or the cables may have been laid at a shallow depth many years ago.

If your property is fed by an overhead power line, do not carry out any work if there is a risk of touching it or getting very close to it. If you do need to work close to the overhead power line, contact the electricity network operator for advice.

Typical activities where problems may occur are:

- felling or cutting back trees and other vegetation
- digging and drilling
- breaking out floors, walls and ceilings
- roofing work
- external painting or wall coating
- re-pointing
- putting scaffolding up
- replacing fascia boards