

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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#0002

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT SAFETY LAWS

Electrical Contractor Obligations

Electrical contractors purchasing and installing electrical equipment should understand their legal obligations and know how to minimise their risk.

Electrical contractors are a part of the supply chain of electrical equipment and have obligations under state Electrical Safety regulations as sellers/ suppliers as well as installers of electrical equipment. Electrical equipment sold, supplied and installed by electrical contractors must comply with the specific product standards listed in Appendix A of the Wiring Rules (AS/NZS 3000: 2007) as well as *AS/NZS 3820 Essential Safety Requirements for Electrical Equipment*.

Electrical equipment standards exist to provide a mandatory minimum level of safety and performance.

Additional Obligations for Electrical Equipment Importers

If you purchase electrical equipment from overseas you will be classified as the equipment importer and have the added obligation of ensuring the equipment is designed, examined and tested to be electrically safe. This testing includes materials flammability and strength, high voltage, product ageing, high current, over current, product marking and dimensional requirement tests.

Electrical Contractor Risks

Regulators can ask contractors for proof of equipment compliance. If you are unable to comply with such a request you may be left with a liability.

The risks of importing, selling, supplying or installing non-compliant electrical equipment include fire, injury, death, fines, imprisonment, loss of electrical license, invalidation of liability insurance and risk to your professional reputation.


Minimising Your Risk

You can minimise your risk by asking your equipment suppliers for proof of compliance and keeping compliance records.

If you import electrical equipment you have added risk. Purchasing equipment from Australian based companies removes this risk.

Installing counterfeit goods infringes on intellectual property rights and can lead to fines and / or imprisonment. You should avoid suspected counterfeit goods and report suspected counterfeiting.

Compliance Marks to look for and Identifying Non-Compliant Products

Under current laws, high risk electrical equipment is required to be marked with either the Regulatory Compliance Mark (RCM)  or the Approval Number. The conditions for use of the RCM are set out in AS/NZS 4417. Approval numbers are issued by the state electrical safety regulators when satisfied that a product complies with the electrical safety regulations.


Non-compliant products can be identified by:

- No certification marks and no supporting compliance documentation forthcoming from the equipment supplier;
- Being easily broken or broken within the packaging;
- Unclear installation instructions; and
- Difficulty inserting plugs into socket outlets or activating switches.

Future changes to Electrical Safety Regulation

Under new laws, due to take effect from 1 March 2013, it will be mandatory for all importers and manufacturers of domestic electrical equipment to be registered as a “Responsible Supplier” on the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council National Database. This Database will have a search facility to enable quick identification of registered responsible suppliers, their brands and high risk equipment.

Additional funds for surveillance, check testing and compliance activity should start to eliminate non-compliant suppliers from the market.

All domestic electrical equipment will be required to be marked with the RCM () within 5 years of the start of the new system. Over time, this common marking system will aid in quicker identification of non-compliant products.

Who to contact with questions or concerns

For more information on product compliance, or to report a suspected non-compliant or counterfeit product, visit the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC) website: www.erac.gov.au

For more information on the Australian Standards visit the Standards Australia website: www.standards.org.au