

Mandatory Electrical Safety Testing

EICR (Fixed Wiring Test) guidance

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

What is an EICR ?

An Electrical Installation Condition Report, also referred to as a Fixed Wiring Test, is an inspection on the condition of an existing electrical installation, to identify (in order of priority) any deficiencies against the national safety standard for electrical installations.

An EICR will:

- Reveal if any of your electrical circuits or equipment is overloaded
- Find any potential electrical shock risks and fire hazards in your electrical installation
- Identify any defective DIY electrical work
- Highlight any lack of earthing or bonding

Tests are also carried out on wiring and associated fixed electrical equipment to check that it is safe. (ie. it is common for electric ovens or hobs to be hard wired into an electrical circuit, ie. no plug, these are usually tested as they form part of the fixed wiring)

A schedule of circuits will also be provided.

Why is an EICR needed?

Every electrical installation deteriorates with use and age. It is important for the person responsible for the maintenance of the installation to be sure that the safety of users is not put at risk, and that the installation continues to be in a safe and serviceable condition.

How long does an EICR last?

EICR's usually last for 5 years, but the electrician may add an earlier date if they feel it should be tested again before 5 years are up. For new build property or those fully refurbished, a domestic installation certificate is carried out, these certificates last for 10 years, unless otherwise directed, following the expiry you would then complete an EICR. (Further guidance is due, as it is likely the 5 year rule may apply to the domestic installation certificate)

Who should undertake an EICR?

EICR's are best left to an experienced electrician or electrical engineer who holds a City and Guilds 2391, Level 3 for Inspection, Testing and Verification of electrical installations with relevant experience in the installation types being tested. In layman's terms, the preferred electrician is one who can complete EICR and complete any recommended works highlighted on the EICR. Insurers tend to ask for relevant accreditations such as NICEIC.

What happens during an EICR?

The approved contractor will check the electrical installation against the requirements of BS7671 – Requirements for Electrical Installations (IEE Wiring Regulations), which is the national safety standard for electrical installations, and contains around 850 Regulations.

The EICR will take into account all relevant circumstances including the following factors:

- Adequacy of earthing and bonding
- Suitability of the switchgear and control gear e.g. consumer unit e.g. an old fuse box with a wooden back, cast iron switches, a haphazard mixture of such equipment is likely to need replacing
- Serviceability of equipment e.g. switches, socket-outlets and light fittings e.g. older round pin sockets, round light switches and braided flex hanging from ceiling roses to light fittings, black switches, sockets mounted in skirting boards may require replacing.
- Type of wiring system and its condition e.g. cables coated in black-rubber, black-rubber was phased out in the 1960s or cables coated in lead or fabric are even older and may need replacing (modern cables use pvc insulation)
- Provision of residual current devices for socket-outlets that may be used to plug in electrical equipment used outdoors
- Presence of adequate identification and notices
- Extent of any wear and tear, damage or other deterioration
- Changes in use of the premises which have led to, or might lead to, deficiencies in the installation.

The Approved Contractor will provide an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) which you should retain.

Will testing cause a lot of disruption to the power?

A short power outage can be expected on each circuit within the system. However where a circuit is crucial and cannot be powered down an exception may be made and recorded on the EICR certificate.

What is an EICR report?

An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) is a formal method of recording the findings of the periodic inspection, on at least seven pages. Example enclosed.

The main purpose of a EICR is to report on the safety condition of an existing installation and should describe the overall condition as either 'satisfactory', in which case no immediate remedial work is required, or 'unsatisfactory' which means remedial work is required to make the installation safe to use.

Where an EICR describes the installation as 'unsatisfactory', the certificate will note 'Observations and Recommendations for Actions to be Taken'.

Where an 'unsatisfactory' electrical installation is recorded a code to indicate the urgency of the action needed is given.

Code/Category 1: 'Danger present'. Risk of injury. Immediate remedial action required.

Code/Category 2: 'Potentially dangerous'. Urgent remedial action required

Code/Category 3: 'Improvement recommended'.

Code 1 & 2 indicates a dangerous, or potentially dangerous, condition that requires urgent attention to make the installation safe. Once the necessary remedial work has been completed, an appropriate certificate should be issued to confirm that the remedial work has been carried out in accordance with BS 7671.

The approved contractor will give a summary of the inspection in the report, which will give a clear indication of the condition of the electrical installation, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

Other than safety and this new piece of legislation are there other reasons to complete an EICR?

Yes, Houses in Multiple Occupation require an EICR and increasingly, insurers are insisting that inspection and testing be carried out on a regular basis. If an avoidable accident or a fire occurs where electricity is suspected to have been the cause, then under law if found guilty you will be deemed to have committed a criminal offence. Insurers will not pay fines or compensation suffered resulting from a criminal offence.

Why have I not needed to have testing carried out before?

The Landlords and Tenants Act 1985 makes it an implied term of every tenancy that the landlord will 'keep in repair the structure and exterior' of the property and 'keep in repair and proper working order the installations in the dwelling-house for the supply of water, gas and electricity, and for sanitation, space heating and heating water'. The landlord cannot make the tenant responsible for these repairs.

What does it cost to have an electrical installation tested?

Due to the vast variations in property electrical provision and coupled with unpredictable demand, it is proving difficult to accurately supply a pricing structure, electricians prefer to quote based on a cost per circuit tested (ie. lighting circuit 1st floor, lighting circuit ground floor, sockets 1st floor etc). This, together with the existing condition of and accessibility to the system will determine the overall cost. We have asked a number of suppliers to supply indicative pricing based on bedroom numbers, but please take this as a guide only, with that in mind it is always best obtain a quote. Having a picture of the consumer board and therefore knowing the number circuits would aid accurate quoting. Approximate pricing: 1 - 3 bed £300, 4 – 5 Bed £420 inc VAT plus any remedial work.