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# Safety Switches in Homes

Consumer, Building and Occupational Services  
Department of Justice



Electrical safety is something you should never take for granted. Safety switches protect you, your family and anyone visiting your home from electric shock.

Safety switches turn off electrical circuits in a fraction of a second if a leakage of current is detected.

Examples of when this can happen include if there is a faulty power point or electrical appliance in your home, or you accidentally hit a live cable while drilling into a wall.



You should engage a licensed electrician to make sure that safety switches are installed on all circuits in your home and are working properly.

### Does my home have safety switches?

Safety switches are different to circuit breakers and fuses. Safety switches protect people from electric shocks, whereas circuit breakers only protect wiring and appliances.

Safety switches will have a 'TEST' or 'T' button. However, they come in different colours, shapes, sizes and types. They sometimes have different labels. They may protect some circuits but not others.

The best way to make sure you are fully protected is to ask a licensed electrician to visit your home and check and test what you have. This ensures that you receive professional advice from an expert.

### How many safety switches do I need?

Safety switches should be installed on all electrical circuits that supply power points, appliances and lights in your home. Your electrician can tell you which circuits need safety switches.



Safety switches save lives

## Do safety switches need to be tested?

Safety switches should be tested at least every three months to make sure they are working.

Anyone can test safety switches by going to the switchboard and pushing the 'TEST' or 'T' button on the safety switch for each circuit. If the safety switch flicks off and cuts the power to the intended circuits, it is working.

After testing, flick the safety switch back on. For circuits with a refrigerator or air conditioner, wait at least two to three minutes before turning the switch back on to avoid possible appliance damage.

If a safety switch doesn't seem to be working, contact your electrician immediately. Do not attempt to replace it yourself.

To watch a video showing how to test safety switches, visit [www.cbos.tas.gov.au/safetyswitches](http://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/safetyswitches)

## How much do safety switches cost?

Safety switches themselves are not expensive and can be installed by any licensed electrician. In some cases, older switchboards may need to be upgraded to accommodate safety switches.

You should get quotes from multiple electricians beforehand. The cost is worth it to protect you and your family.

### Will safety switches always protect against electric shock?

No. Safety switches are extra protection only. Damaged wiring or appliances are still a safety risk. Therefore, it is important to immediately replace any damaged electrical appliances, wiring and extension cords in your home to reduce the safety risk.



### More information

For more information, visit [www.cbos.tas.gov.au/safetyswitches](http://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/safetyswitches)

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