



CBOS
Consumer, Building &
Occupational Services
Promoting a fair marketplace

Safety Switches in Workplaces

Consumer, Building and Occupational Services
Department of Justice



Managing electrical risks in workplaces is important to ensure that you, your workers and visitors to your premises are safe.



Safety switches, also known as residual current devices (RCDs), help to protect people from electric shocks. They do this by disconnecting electrical circuits when a leakage of current is detected. This may happen when electrical equipment or a power point is faulty, or if someone accidentally makes contact with a live cable or a live part in equipment.



You should engage a licensed electrician to make sure that safety switches are installed on all circuits in your workplace and are functioning correctly.



Does my workplace have safety switches?

Safety switches are different to circuit breakers and fuses. Safety switches protect people from electric shocks, whereas circuit breakers only offer limited protection to circuit wiring and equipment.

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 your workplace is fully protected is to ask a licensed electrician to visit your premises, check and test what you have, and install more safety switches if necessary. This ensures that you receive professional advice from an expert.

Does my workplace need safety switches?

Safety switches are important for all workplaces to protect you, your workers and visitors from electric shock.

Safety switches are required in some workplaces where the environment is higher risk. Examples include where electrical equipment is exposed to damage by impact, moisture, heat, vibration, chemicals, dust, or is moved often.

For more information, read the Code of Practice on Managing Electrical Risks in the Workplace on the WorkSafe Tasmania website: worksafe.tas.gov.au

How many safety switches do workplaces need?

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

Do safety switches need to be tested?

Safety switches must be tested regularly to ensure that they are working. Keep records of these tests at your workplace. Safety switches should be tested at least every three months, but more frequent testing may be required in your workplace.

Safety switches can be tested by any person by pushing the 'TEST' or 'T' button on the device. If the safety switch flicks off and cuts the power to the intended circuits, it is working.

After testing, turn 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 appear to be working, contact your electrician immediately. Do not attempt to replace it yourself.

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, your workers and visitors to your premises.

Will safety switches always protect against electric shock?

No. Safety switches are extra protection only.

Damaged wiring or electrical equipment is still a safety risk. Even if safety switches are installed, it is important to ensure that electrical equipment and installations are in good working order through regular inspections and testing.

For more information, read the Code of Practice on Managing Electrical Risks in the Workplace on the WorkSafe Tasmania website: worksafe.tas.gov.au



More information

For more information, visit
www.cbos.tas.gov.au/safetyswitches

Department of Justice
Consumer, Building and Occupational Services
PO Box 56, Rosny TAS 7018
P: 1300 65 44 99
E: cbos.info@justice.tas.gov.au
W: www.cbos.tas.gov.au

This document is based on information originally produced by the Electrical Safety Office, Queensland Government, and has been reproduced and published with their permission. It is a resource and reference document for general information only. Published July 2022.