

# Electrical goods safety regulations

Trading Standards Information

[www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

## 1. Introduction

Unsafe electrical equipment has the potential to kill or injure so there are strict safety regulations concerning the supply of both new and second-hand electrical goods.

If you supply an unsafe item you could be held liable for any deaths or injuries. You could also be prosecuted for supplying any unsafe equipment.

This leaflet outlines the main legal requirements of relevant safety regulations for basic retailer guidance but is not a comprehensive guide to the law.

## 2. Main legal requirements

### ***All equipment;***

- There is a general requirement that electrical equipment must be safe and be constructed in accordance with good engineering practices in relation to safety matters. In practice this is usually achieved by manufacturers making the equipment to British, European or International Standards.
- Manufacturers must confirm that the equipment conforms to the regulations by marking the equipment, packing or instructions with the **CE** mark.
- To protect against electrical shock equipment must either, incorporate a green and yellow earth wire in the flexible cord, or be constructed with double or reinforced insulation.
- All equipment must be fitted with a correctly fused UK plug unless it is designed to be permanently connected to the mains.
- The users of electrical equipment must be able to understand how to operate it correctly by means of instructions for safe use or appropriate markings on the equipment.
- The manufacturer's brand name or trade mark should be clearly printed on the electrical equipment or, where that is not possible, on the packaging.

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### 3. How can I check that equipment meets these requirements?

#### ▪ **Markings**

Check that either the goods, packaging or instructions bear the **CE** mark and the manufacturer's name or trade mark. If these are not present do not stock the goods.

If the safe use of the equipment relies on users being aware of particular characteristics check that instructions are provided or the equipment is marked appropriately.

#### ▪ **Flexible cord / mains lead**

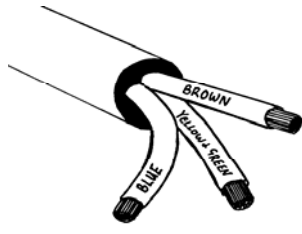
The conductive wires must be colour coded as follows;

**GREEN AND YELLOW - FOR EARTH (WHERE FITTED)**

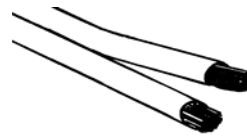
**BLUE - FOR NEUTRAL**

**BROWN - FOR LIVE**

The mains lead must consist of double insulated wiring or equivalent, in other words, the individual conducting wires must be covered in the appropriately coloured PVC/rubber insulation which in turn will be covered in a further layer of insulation (see illustration below).



DOUBLE INSULATED

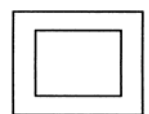


SINGLE INSULATED

If the lead is not detachable from the equipment it must be able to withstand a reasonable pulling force to prevent the accidental exposure of live conducting wires. This is achieved by incorporating a cord grip to anchor the lead at the point where it enters the equipment. Check that the lead cannot be easily pulled from the equipment - cheap foreign appliances have been found without these grips.

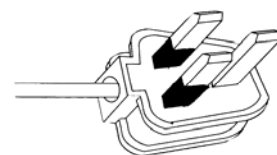
#### ▪ **Double insulated equipment**

Double insulated equipment will not have a green and yellow earth wire and can often be identified by the marking shown here. Typically such equipment will have an outer case made of plastic, for example hand held hair-dryers.



#### ▪ **Fitted plugs**

UK plugs must be correctly fitted unless the electrical equipment is intended to be permanently connected to the fixed wiring. The plugs must be of an approved type with sheathed live and neutral pins as illustrated. Any cord grips in the plug should grip the outer insulation of the lead - not just the coloured conductors.



APPROVED PLUG WITH SHEATHED  
LIVE AND NEUTRAL PINS

Approved plugs will be marked as such, for example by BSI or ASTA

The plug must be fitted with an appropriately rated fuse for the equipment concerned.

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#### **4. Problems often found in Southwark**

- ***Decorative picture lights***

Do not stock imported items which do not bear manufacturers details, the CE marking or have a UK plug.

- ***Table lamps / standard lamps***

These should have insulating shielding around the lamp socket to cover the metal part of the bulb.

- ***Desk fans, stand alone fans etc.***

It should not be possible to touch the rotating blades through the guard. Do not sell any fans where this is possible.

#### **5. What happens if I don't comply with these requirements?**

These requirements stem from Regulations made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

Failure to comply is an offence and any business persons in the chain of supply are liable for prosecution. On conviction the courts may impose a fine of up to £5000 or imprisonment for up to 6 months, or both.

In addition equipment may be seized by Trading Standards Officers and forfeited by the courts.

#### **6. Further information**

If you require further assistance on these requirements, or would like additional information leaflets, please contact us at the address given.