

Electrical Safety First

Parliamentary Briefing: Westminster Hall debate on the “*Regulation of online sales of electrical products*”

Tuesday 9th July, 1100-1130

1. Key Messages

- Electrical Safety First is the UK charity dedicated to reducing fires, deaths and injuries caused by electrical accidents. The charity has long been concerned with the unregulated sales of electrical goods and supports Carolyn Harris MP in securing this debate in Westminster Hall.
- The current online sales of electrical goods are poorly regulated which undermines both consumer protections and legitimate, responsible business. Poor quality imported products pose an increased risk of fire and electric shock to their users, and more must be done to protect the public.
- Electrical Safety First provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Home Electrical Safety, and we support the recommendations of its most recent report on this subject, “The Sale of Electrical Products Online”, available here: <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/2036/appg-home-electrical-safety-online-sales-final.pdf>
- As the report notes: “*Whilst the online sale of electrical products offers advantages in terms of greater choice and improved value for consumers, there are also a number of potential safety and consumer rights related issues. As the online retail sector of the economy grows year-on-year, these problems have become of increasing concern to consumers, manufacturers, retailers and enforcement bodies*” **Electrical Safety First wants to see the Government and OPSS undertake a review of the current situation and support the campaign for improved regulation of these electrical goods sales.**

2. Current issues with online sale of electrical products

- Electrical Safety First believes there are significant issues with online market places controlling what is sold on their sites. The current issues are: -
 - Online sales have flooded the UK marketplace with low cost, low quality and often unsafe electrical goods.
 - It is currently very difficult to enforce the existing regulations to combat these sales and online market places are not able to self regulate themselves, due to a lack of knowledge or inability to deal with the volumes of listings. For example, electrical items are being sold that are recalled or not compatible for use in the UK.

- With online marketplaces it is much harder to trace supply chain operators, and transparency can be almost non-existent. Consumers may often be under the impression that they are buying from the marketplace directly, rather than a trader.
- Consumers can directly import products from outside the EU and therefore UK product safety regulations and safeguards do not apply.
- Market surveillance operations are almost impossible to apply to one-off imports at ports, and the volume of such transactions is increasing at a rapid rate.

3. Solutions from Electrical Safety First

- Electrical Safety First would welcome further collaboration with the Government and OPSS in order to try and find solutions to these problems that are potentially putting UK consumers at risk. We believe the Government needs to come forward with a package of measures including: -
 - Online marketplaces must take responsibility for the products being sold on their platforms, and must take swift action to remove dangerous, counterfeit and non-compliant products from sale.
 - Legislative obligations should be placed on online market sellers to ensure safety compliance, i.e. preventing the sale of non-compliant products that don't have a UK plug.
 - Private sales between individuals needs to be reviewed and consumer legislation tightened for greater rights after sale.
 - Online business sellers should be required to provide a name and address to improve traceability and assist consumer redress.
 - Increased funding and support for enforcement action at ports and airports where electrical products enter the UK.
 - Public information campaigns, from both local and central Government, to help educate the public on the dangers present and how they can protect themselves from unsafe electrical goods.
- **Electrical Safety First believes the Government must make it clear that it is prepared to act in the public interest if online marketplaces fail to protect their customers from unsafe products and practices.**

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