

What about RCD sockets?

I was delighted to read about the launch of the ESC's Plug Into Safety campaign in the last issue of *Switched On* magazine: as the company that first launched RCD adaptors in the UK and has pioneered RCD use for the past 35 years, it's a campaign that we at GreenBrook wholeheartedly support.

However, this campaign is about educating the marketplace and ensuring that both those that specify RCDs and those that use them in the home are familiar with all the products available so that they can select the best solution for their needs. What I was left asking myself after I'd read your article was - how can this education campaign hope to succeed if many of the most popular and widely-used RCD product types are not even mentioned in the media coverage?

While the article discussed the importance of consumer board units and portable adaptors, no mention was made at all of RCD sockets or fused spurs, both of which are best sellers. Leaving out these product types from any discussion fails to educate the marketplace and, ultimately, will fail to increase levels of safety. The stark facts are that almost 10% of all fires in the UK are caused by electrical faults of one kind or another and that equates to just over 20,000 fires every year! What's more, 50% of UK homes still do not have RCD protection (that's 13 million homes), all of which highlights the need for better understanding of the role of RCD protection and the varied forms it can take.

Obviously, in the commercial world everyone wants to sell the products that will help them develop market share, but the issues at stake here are more than simply commercial - this is a matter of life and death. That's why my recent presentation on RCDs to the Electrical Distributors' Association (EDA) covered product types that GreenBrook doesn't even sell and why I would urge anyone else involved in the manufacture, promotion or sale of RCDs to focus on a clear, representative safety message, regardless of their own commercial interests.

It's time we all did our bit to improve electrical safety in the home and that means educating the public...not misleading them.

Richard Shaw
Managing Director
GreenBrook Electrical

The ESC replies: The early stages of the Plug into Safety campaign needs to raise awareness of RCDs and the additional protection they provide. In our annual consumer survey, 60% of respondents stated that they didn't know what an RCD was and 8% gave the wrong answer when asked to explain what it is (Source: MORI, April 2010).

In order to get the RCD message to people when they are most receptive, the Council felt it important initially to target people when they are gardening or doing DIY or when an electrician is already working on their home/property. We therefore felt it most important to promote RCD adaptors and consumer unit replacement, particularly in the first year.

By focusing on these two most accessible examples of RCD use we hope to 'introduce' the benefits of RCD protection in the simplest possible fashion. Experience has taught us that if we promote too complex, or too many messages, we are likely to confuse people. As we are planning to run this campaign over a five-year period, we will be referring to the various kinds of RCDs available in future activity.

And in reference to the 50% figure quoted in the letter - 13 million homes do not have adequate RCD protection, rather than none at all.

Angela Murphy
Media Manager
Electrical Safety Council



Letters

We hope you like the new Letters column. Now all we need to do is to fill it regularly!

I'm sure that there are many within the electrical industry that will have strong feelings about some of the issues raised in *Switched On*. So feel free to shout about them.

Please email your letters to andrewbrister@ymail.com

Please note that we will not be able to enter into correspondence regarding every letter received, nor will we have the space to publish every viewpoint. We reserve the right to edit letters for publication.