

PREVENTATIVE ELECTRICAL MAINTENANCE IN STRATA COMPLEXES

Fire damage claims represent a significant cost to strata insurers and a major inconvenience to owners and tenants. Faulty or poorly maintained electrical systems are often the cause of these incidents, with Fire and Rescue NSW attributing almost 40% of house fires each year to electrical issues. The high volume of ageing strata properties throughout Australia means the issue is set to continue if preventative actions are not taken. Regular preventative electrical maintenance helps reduce the risk of a serious claim and enhances the safety of all residents within your strata complex. Here are four simple actions you can take to reduce your risk and the risk to others nearby.

1. THERMOGRAPHIC SCANNING

Thermal Imaging or Thermographic Scanning is an effective way to identify load imbalances and hotspots (electrical parts that are damaged or worn will emit a higher level of heat than the surrounding area on a switchboard). More and more Strata Insurers now require old wiring to be inspected for compliance as well as regular Thermographic Scanning of switchboards.

The use of infra-red technology by a qualified electrician can identify abnormal temperatures within switchboard systems and rectify them in the early stages. Identifying issues before they escalate also prevents any downtime while damaged parts are replaced, which can sometimes take months to manufacture.

2. REWIRING

Common issues like overloaded electrical circuits, worn-out insulation on old wiring systems, the absence of grounding systems, and incorrectly modified wiring all increase the risk of fire and electrocution.

Often, properties constructed more than 50 years ago will exhibit some of these issues. In some cases, the replacement of these systems is necessary (and often required depending on the type of wiring system). If the property is more than 50 years old, arrange an inspection by a qualified electrician who can assess these issues.

3. INSTALLATION & TESTING OF RESIDUAL CURRENT DEVICES (RCDs)

RCDs or Residual Current Devices are used to regulate the flow of electricity and automatically disconnect the flow when an imbalance is detected in the circuit. These systems are vital to avoid serious injury by electrocution.

In Australia, RCDs have only been mandatory on power circuits since 1991, so be sure to check the property is fitted with an approved device. Regular testing and tagging of RCDs by a qualified electrician can reveal whether the supply is tripping rapidly enough to avoid electrocution. Push-button testing of your RCD is also required on a 6-monthly basis under Australian Standards. In Western Australia, the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation & Safety recommends this is done every 3 months.

4. TESTING & TAGGING OF COMMUNAL APPLIANCES

Testing and Tagging involves the visual and electrical inspection of an appliance to ensure it is in safe and working order. This can only be carried out by suitably qualified technicians and should be done regularly.

Faulty communal appliances such as dryers and washing machines can contribute to the risk of electrocution or fire, so it's vital that regular testing and tagging of these appliances is conducted.

A FINAL NOTE

The above solutions are not exhaustive, and all electrical maintenance should be referred to a suitably qualified professional who can assist you in developing and carrying out a regular maintenance schedule.

WITH YOU ALL THE WAY

To learn more about how Honan can assist you in managing your Property and Strata risks, please reach out at any time.

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