



REAL ESTATE  
MATTERS

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# New rules for RCDs and smoke alarms

From August 9, sellers of residential properties will be required by State law to have two residual current devices (RCDs), installed in the property. These safety devices must be in place by the settlement date.

The same law applies to owners of rental properties. Any residential property newly leased must comply from August 9. For existing tenants where no new lease is required, the RCDs must be fitted by August 9, 2011.

These devices can save people from electrocution and protect against fires which can start from small leakages of

current from wires with damaged or perished insulation. Any licensed electrician can supply and fit the RCDs.

There can be an exemption where the buyer will be demolishing the property. A specified date for demolition must be nominated and cannot be more than six months from the date of transfer. The seller is required to send that buyer's statement to the Director of Energy Safety.

There can also be an exemption if an inspector agrees that a switchboard is not suitable for two RCDs — for example, insufficient space.

In these rare cases, the seller or landlord will only have to fit one RCD. The new regulations will mainly affect premises where construction began before 2001, when it became compulsory to fit at least two RCDs in all new dwellings.

In addition to this RCD requirement, there will soon be a further requirement to have hard-wired smoke alarms, not more than 10 years old, in all residential properties being sold or made available for lease. The common battery-operated smoke alarms will no longer be sufficient.

Where a hard-wired alarm cannot be fitted (such as flats or units with concrete ceilings that won't readily facilitate new wiring), long-life lithium battery-operated smoke alarms must be installed. This law is expected to come into effect in October.

REIWA understands that the State Government bodies involved in these safety reforms will run a community education campaign to explain the changes. Be aware of this campaign and talk to your real estate agent or property manager if these requirements affect your property.

If your property is affected, you should contact an electrical contractor familiar with the requirements, or ask your property manager to attend to it.

A breach of these incoming laws can result in fines. However, it is not expected that penalties will be enforced during the introductory period.

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For more information about RCDs, contact the Division of Energy Safety at the Department of Commerce in Perth on 9422 5200.

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