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Issue 1

Electrical Goods

Advice on selling safe second-hand electrical devices

Your responsibilities

If you are in the business of selling any second-hand electrical goods you should be aware that:

- all goods you have for sale must meet legal safety requirements
- anyone injured by unsafe goods you have sold may be able to claim compensation from you through the courts
- if you are unsure if goods are safe then we strongly advise you to stop selling them and have them checked by an expert.

General Requirements

Be sure electrical equipment is safe

The equipment you sell must be safe. If it complies with an acceptable standard, e.g. a British/European Standard, it will normally meet safety requirements.

These safety requirements cover:

- labelling, construction, design and manufacture
- insulation and earthing
- protection from electric shock
- adequate guards for radiant heaters
- preventing the generation of excessive heat, radiation or toxic gases
- the need to provide instructions for safe use.

Particular requirements

The wires of a three-core mains lead are usually coloured as follows:

- Earth – green and yellow
- Neutral – blue
- Live – brown

The old red, black and green colours are undesirable as they may make the product unsafe and so illegal.

- if you change a lead, have it checked by an electrician
- incorrect wiring may cause electrocution

Plugs and sockets

- Distributors and retailers including second-hand dealers and auctions must only sell appliances which are correctly fitted with an approved plug with sleeved pins and the correct fuse.
- All plugs must carry the name and reference number of the approval body, normally BSI or ASTA. The plug does not have to be moulded on but it must be fused.
- Some appliances may be supplied without a standard plug, for instance because the appliance is intended to be permanently connected to a fixing wiring.
- As British Standards are periodically revised and improved, we recommend you fit appliances with new plugs which meet the latest specifications before sale and dispose of the old ones.
- You must provide clear wiring instructions for the plug if it is of the rewirable kind (eg manufacturer's wiring card usually fitted over the pins).
- All sockets (eg on mains extension leads), adaptors and similar devices must meet British Standards.

Safe Fireguards for electric fires

Electric fires for use in the home must have a fireguard which meets British Standards or the European equivalent. The distance between the bars and the strength of the guard are laid down in these Standards.

The fire guard is satisfactory if any vertical bars are 5mm or less apart, otherwise the guard must satisfy one of the following:

- if the horizontal bars are 12mm or less apart then the vertical bars must not be more than 125mm apart, or

- if the horizontal bars are 20mm or less apart then the vertical bars must not be more than 50mm apart.

Selling electric blankets

We advise you not to sell secondhand electric blankets, as their history, usage and condition may be unknown.

Further Information

If you sell second-hand electrical goods which are unsafe or incorrectly labelled and you haven't taken reasonable precautions to avoid this, you may be prosecuted. You could be fined £5000 and/or imprisoned for up to six months.

Taking reasonable precautions means you must take positive steps to ensure that you comply with the law. This will mean in most cases having the goods checked by a qualified electrician.

We are happy to provide further advice or literature to assist you in complying. We also enforce a range of other consumer or trading legislation which might affect you. Examples include furniture, gas appliances and toys.