



Downlights

HOME GUIDES AND ADVICE ELECTRICAL ITEMS DOWNLIGHTS

Downlight Safety

Downlights are one of the most attractive ways to brighten up your home, but poorly installed downlights are the cause of a significant number of fires in homes every year.

What is a downlight?

Downlights (recessed luminaries) are light fixtures installed in hollow openings, usually in ceilings. By installing them in these hollow recesses the light looks as if it is part of the ceiling, rather than hanging down or sitting separate from the ceiling.

Types of downlights

Downlights operate at mains voltage (230 Volts) or are powered via a transformer at extra-low voltage (12 Volts). Extra-low voltage (ELV) downlighters are often described as "low voltage" on product packaging.

Downlights may also be described as 'Fire rated'. This means they have in-built fire protection that completely seals the downlighter in the event of fire in the room below, to prevent the spread of fire and smoke into other areas.

For all downlights installed into a ceiling, Electrical Safety First recommends the use of 'fire rated' downlights fitted with aluminium reflector lamps to ensure fire and excessive heat are kept out of cavities.

Thinking of installing new downlights?

We recommend that you use a registered electrician to install your downlights and that you keep the manufacturer's instructions in a safe place for future reference, such as when you need to replace a lamp.

When fitting replacement lamps:

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check the packaging and the downlighter for details of correct replacement lamps and do not exceed the maximum allowed wattage.

- Always switch off the electricity before changing a lamp.
- Don't fit a cool beam (dichroic) reflector lamp unless the downlight is specifically designed for use with that type of lamp. If in doubt, fit only aluminium reflector lamps.
- If the lampholder is damaged, scorched or corroded, do not fit the lamp, and seek advice from a registered electrician.

Checking your existing downlights

- Check for visible markings on downlights indicating lamp wattage and lamp type
- Check downlights and their surroundings for signs of overheating such as curled labels and discolouration or scorching
- Ensure that downlights installed in floor and ceiling cavities have sufficient space around them
- Ensure that downlights are not in contact with or covered by loft insulation or combustible material, unless they are designed to operate safely in those conditions
- Check that downlights are not installed near furniture, curtains or similar combustible items
- If cool beam (dichroic) lamps are fitted in downlights designed for use with aluminium reflector lamps only, replace them with the correct type

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