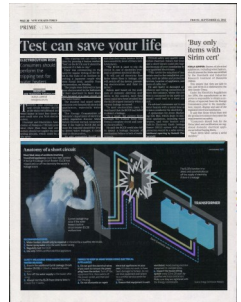


Headline	Test can save your life		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	13 Sep 2013	Color	Full Color
Section	Local News	Circulation	136,530
Page No	20	Readership	330,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	687 cm ²
Journalist	BALQIS LIM	AdValue	RM 22,327
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 66,981



Test can save your life

**BALQIS LIM
AND THARANYA ARUMUGAM
ELECTROCUTION RISK:**

Consumers should perform the tripping test for water heaters

TESTING your residual-current circuit breaker (RCCB) at the main switchboard and water heater at least four times a year could save you from electrocution.

Electrical and Electronics Association of Malaysia (TEEAM) president Chew Shee Fuee said consumers should not neglect the easy testing process, which could be a life-saver.

“The tripping test can easily be done by pressing a button marked ‘Test’ on the RCCB, and it should be replaced if it fails to trip.”

Chew was commenting on the need for regular testing of the RCCB in the wake of an incident involving a Japanese couple who were found dead, possibly from electrocution, on Monday.

The couple were believed to have been electrocuted in the bathroom of their apartment in Mont Kiara here because of a short circuit in

the water heater.

The incident had raised safety concerns over household electrical appliances, especially water heaters.

The Energy Commission of Malaysia’s department of electrical safety regulation director Abdul Rahim Ibrahim warned consumers that if the built-in RCCB did not meet the required sensitivity level to detect water leakages, it could lead to electrocution.

He said consumers should ensure that their water heaters’ RCCB has a sensitivity level of 10mA (milliAmphere).

“The RCCB is used to trip the circuit in case of electricity overload to prevent electrical shocks.

“It will cut off electricity flow faster when there is leakage, and will switch off the device, preventing electrocution and fatal injuries.”

Rahim said based on the analyses of domestic electrical accidents in the country, most fatal cases could have been avoided had the RCCB tripped instantly when a current leakage occurred.

“In most electrocution cases, it was found that the RCCB had failed to detect a leakage.

“As a result, the current flows

through the human body and forms a complete circuit and causes electrocution.”

He said the RCCB could also fail to detect a leakage because of mechanism failure or lack of maintenance.

TEEAM safety and quality committee chairman Dahari Mat Siran said a short-circuit could also happen because of poor installation by non-qualified electricians.

“This covers the selection of materials used in the installation process, such as cables and protective devices, location of appliance, and route of cable run.”

He said faulty or damaged appliances and wrong connection of wires (for instance, where the live wire is connected to the earth terminal) could lead to a short circuit.

He advised consumers not to use water heaters with a metal hose as it was a conductor for electricity.

A spokesman for Joven Marketing Sdn Bhd, which deals in electrical appliances, including water heaters, said water heaters with built-in Electronic Earth Leakage Sensor (EELS) system with surge protectors would be a safer option.

Additional reporting by Norbaiti Phaharadzki

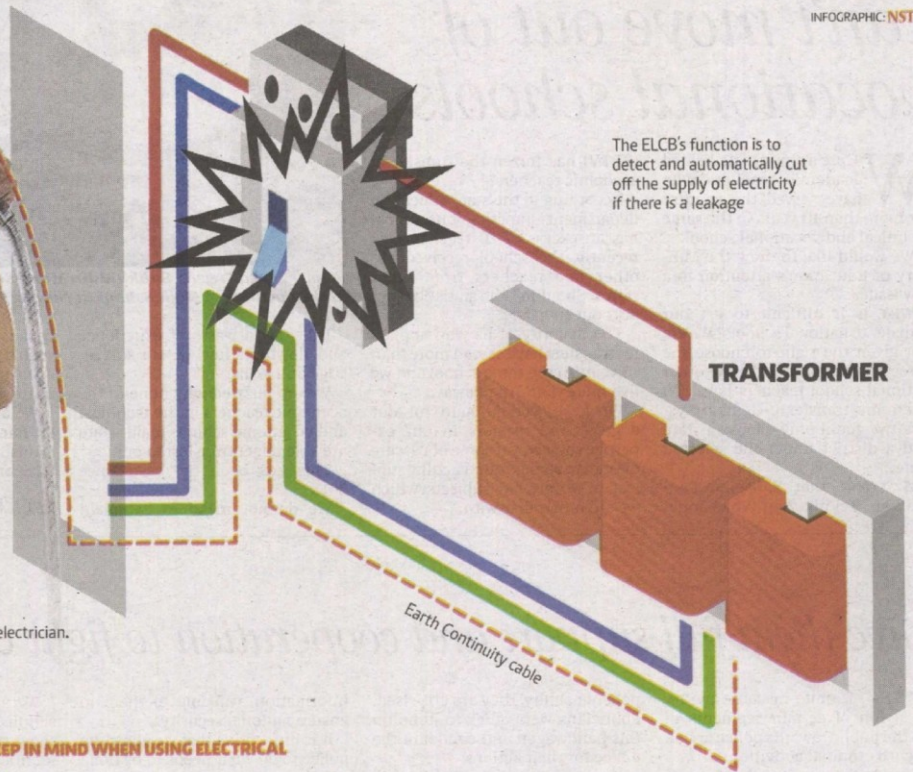
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Anatomy of a short circuit

Most fatal cases of accidents involving household appliances could have been avoided if the Earth Leakage Circuit Breaker (ELCB) had tripped and cut off the electricity the second a leakage occurs



Current leakage may occur if the water heater's built-in circuit breaker (ELCB) malfunctions



The ELCB's function is to detect and automatically cut off the supply of electricity if there is a leakage

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Water heaters should only be repaired or installed by a qualified electrician.
2. Never spray water onto the water heater casing
3. Regularly test the ELCB
4. Use only SIRIM-certified electrical appliances

SAFETY MEASURES WHEN USING INSTANT WATER HEATERS

1. Ensure the additional Earth Leakage Circuit Breaker (ELCB) of 10mA is installed in water heaters.
2. Turn off the water supply to the heater after using.
3. Always test the ELCB from time to time to ensure that it works.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN USING ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

1. Do not pull the electrical wires if you want to remove the power plug from the socket. Turn off the equipment first, then switch off the power socket, and then pull out the plug.
2. Do not dismantle or repair electrical appliances on your own. If it does not work, or have been damaged or broken, do not use that equipment and send it to a certified service centre for repairs.
3. Ensure that equipment is well-

4. Inspect the house wiring system every 10 to 20 years by qualified electrical contractors. Make sure they are registered with the Energy Commission.

Source: Energy Commission Malaysia