

Christmas tree lights

The following article has been provided by the Energy Safety Service



Every year from approximately mid-November until Christmas, the Energy Safety Service checks importers and sellers of potentially lethal poor quality Christmas light sets.

In February 2005 in order to address this annual problem Christmas lights were added to the Declared Articles list. That action resulted in only formally approved light sets being able to be legally sold in New Zealand.

Last year there was a marked improvement with retailers, in the main, being able to determine which light sets were acceptable.

In October this year, thanks to an observant electrician, the Energy Safety Service became aware of a particular light set that was not only non-approved and dangerous, but also was being sold in volume nationally through low cost shopping outlets.

The Energy Safety Service have traced the source of the light sets and prohibited the sale/use of the sets.

The importer of the light sets in question agreed to perform a voluntary national safety recall.

The Energy Safety Service have followed up with concentrated effort to find similar non-compliant product nationally in conjunction with Radio Spectrum Management officers who have concerns with non-compliance of some light sets with the Radio Telecommunications Regulations.

The key safety issues with the light sets in question is the use of live conductors covered with only basic insulation that can crack and peel exposing live parts.

Also the supply conductor terminations into control boxes were only supported by the direct soldering onto printed

circuit boards. Consequently with very little movement connections break allowing the live exposed ends of conductors to protrude from control boxes.

The Energy Safety Service believes that the easiest way to recognise non compliant light sets is to look for sets fitted with foreign non-approved plugs.

The Energy Safety Service considers that product which is not fitted with the correct plugs is not intended for the New Zealand market and is potentially a safety problem.

The Energy Safety Service also recommends that product ratings, or lack of, should be checked.

Whilst 220 V 60Hz may seem close to New Zealand

requirements, products with such ratings can use a different insulation system from that considered necessary a 230 V 50 Hz system.

Instructions and markings in foreign languages are also indicators that close examination of product is necessary.

The Energy Safety Service advises that electrical workers should be particularly vigilant if asked to change plugs or install appliances and fittings where the above mentioned indicators are present.

The Energy Safety Service has provided the following photographs to demonstrate the types of light sets in question.

