

For a consumer unit/ fuse box or electric vehicle charge point to be installed or replaced safely, it is necessary to isolate the circuit from the mains supply. This can be done by removing the service cut-out fuse. Electricians are not currently permitted to perform this task themselves. Instead, they must contact the electricity supplier to arrange for its removal.

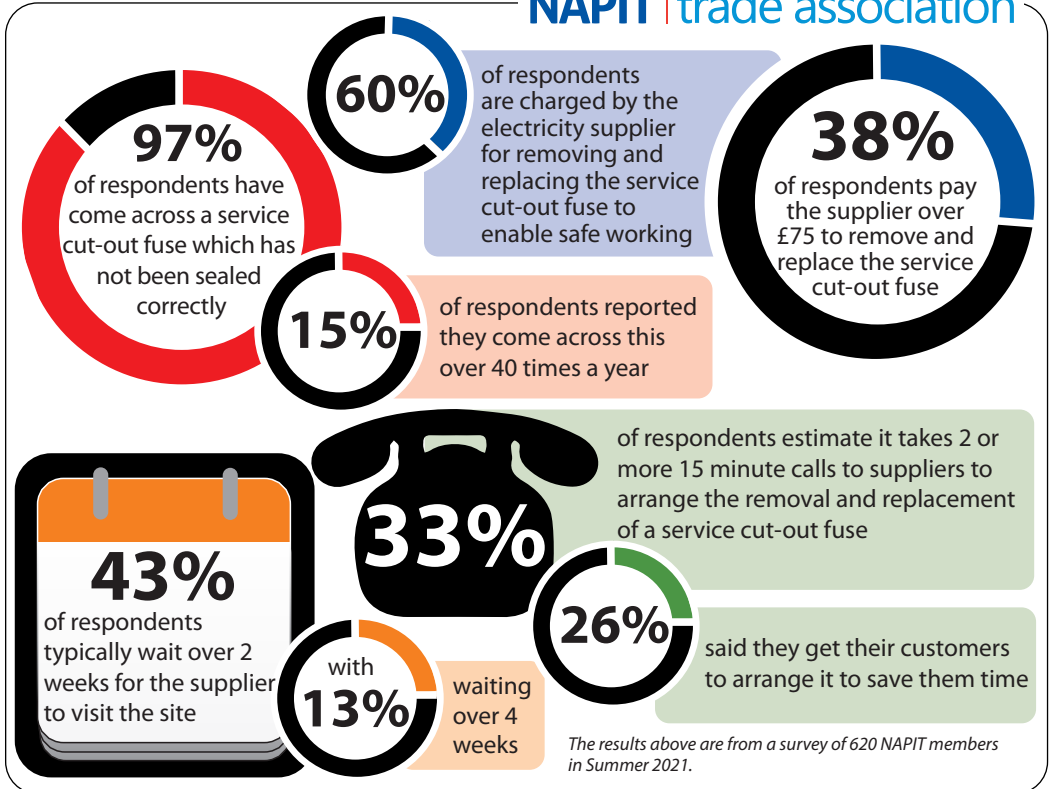
This procedure is time consuming, costly and ultimately unnecessary for registered electricians, who have already demonstrated their technical competence.

A nationwide solution is necessary to replace this redundant red tape with a simple solution that will save small business and the consumer both time and money, without compromising on safety.

Risk

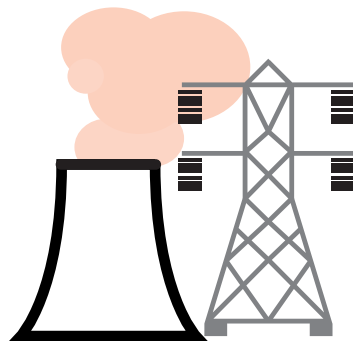
The cost and waiting time for the service cut-out fuse removal varies significantly between electricity suppliers. Due to the frustration this causes, anecdotal evidence suggests that electricians are removing service cut-out fuses themselves. In most instances electricians are not authorised to do this.

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Distribution Network Operator (DNO) and Electricity Supplier Obligations

DNO's and Electricity suppliers have a legal obligation to ensure the electrical equipment they own is safe. This includes equipment which is located in customers premises as documented in Section 24 of The Electricity, Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations. The reluctance to allow those not directly employed by themselves to touch their equipment is one of liability although the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have confirmed that there is 'no legislative barrier to prevent DNO/Supplier authorising others, including registered electricians, providing that those electricians are competent to carry out such work.'



NAPIT continue to be involved in a Distribution Connection and Use of System Agreement (DCUSA) Draft Change Proposal 390 industry working group to define the process of how a customer can obtain timely main supply electrical isolations to allow for safe working on their electrical installations.

Solution

Although the above proposal is a welcome sign of progress within the industry, in our view it doesn't go far enough. We propose a scheme is developed to permit registered competent electricians to remove and replace service cut-out fuses for the purpose of affording temporary isolation.



A low risk, cost effective way of achieving this would be to:

Create a new Scheme, operated by UKAS accredited Certification Bodies, to register competent persons to carry out the temporary removal and replacement of service fuse cut-out seals in domestic installations. The requirements of such a scheme would be under the Electrotechnical Assessment Specification (EAS) and would operate UK wide. Registrants on the scheme would be individuals, and would need to meet industry agreed competence requirements and be regularly assessed to ensure their ongoing competence.

Each registrant of the scheme would be issued with temporary service cut-out seals which have a unique identifiable number to ensure work can be monitored.

This proposal is based on a model already used by one major supplier who considers this to be a pragmatic approach that removes barriers but is still rigorously controlled, to help electricians achieve safe isolation.

HSE have confirmed that the creation of such a scheme would be perfectly legal if the electrical installers undertaking the work were competent.

