

# Safety first in rental properties

Landlords of rental properties should inspect for electrical faults every few months or instruct their agents to do so, purely for safety reasons, says Gail Cawood, rentals manager for Knight Frank Residential SA.



By Tomwsulcer – [Wikimedia Commons](#)

A recent case involved an oven reported by an ingoing tenant as faulty that actually revealed that the old stove and oven needed replacement and not just repair as they created a fire hazard. Initially, the owner wanted the element repaired in the oven as it was malfunctioning, but, because the oven was a very old model (it was over 20 years old and the owner admitted it had never been replaced since he had bought the unit), the electrician called out could not find the necessary spare parts and suggested replacement instead.

When the old appliance was removed, they found that the cupboards and countertop on either side of the stove had been charred and burnt to the point of crumbling. Had the stove and oven perhaps been left on for prolonged periods of time, this could have started a fire, which would easily have spread to the rest of the kitchen.

There were other faults reported, such as faulty light switches and plug points – and these were also in urgent need of repair as they were “shorting” and could have become a fire hazard or could have shocked someone.

## Report malfunctions as soon as possible

Tenants must allow their rental agent or landlord to inspect the property from time to time (with reasonable notice as laid out in their lease agreement) as this is not done only to ensure that no damage is done to the property, but to check that everything is in working order within the unit. In addition, anyone renting a property must report things that malfunction as soon as possible as these can become hazards if not remedied.

Faults will not generally be picked up by the owner as he is not a resident in the home and if the agent cannot enter to do the necessary inspections, these could cause serious damage. In addition, the resulting damage might not necessarily be covered by the household insurance policy, warned Cawood.

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