

# 80pc of all plugs and adaptors 'dangerous'

By a STAFF REPORTER

MORE than 80 per cent of electrical plugs and adaptors used in Hong Kong homes are unsafe, according to research by the Consumer Council.

In an attempt to improve the safety standards of plugs, laws will be gazetted today, requiring all plugs and adaptors to comply with new safety requirements and standards.

The chief research and testing officer at the council, Connie Lau Yin-hing, said safety standards on nearly all household plugs and adaptors had been found to be very poor.

"Some tests demonstrated a 100 per cent failure rate so the 80 per cent we estimate are unsafe is just the average," she said.

"We have done nine types of tests on plugs and adaptors and electrical accessories and the test results invariably show undesirable safety aspects," she said.

"These include poor design, overheating and poor design for precautions against accidental contact, so the user would get an electric shock."

The acting assistant director of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, John Chan Hing-nin, said the most common unsafe features of adaptors were that most of them did not come with safety shutters or fuses.

"If it hasn't got a safety shutter it means that a plug could be plugged into the adaptor in any position leaving some of the pins of the adaptor exposed and therefore electrocute the user," he said.

Electrocution and household fires were the greatest risks posed by unsafe plugs and adaptors, Mr Chan said.

Figures released by the Fire Services Department recorded 1,020 house fires which were started by an electrical fault in the six months between January and July this year, slightly less than the 1,070 recorded for the same period last year.

Last year, a total of 14 people were fatally electrocuted, of which four were due to faulty appliances.

Mr Chan said people should only use three-pin plugs and adaptors (with the exception of electric razors which can safely use a two-pin plug) and ensure they carry the correct electrical current rating for the appliances it will power.

All adaptors must have safety shutters and consumers are warned not to use an adaptor which has irregular sockets or which could accept a plug with a current rating higher than its own.

Mr Chan said there would be a six-month grace period before people were prosecuted for selling unsafe plugs.

"If we make it an offence to use unsafe plugs then

when the legislation is put into effect most people will commit an offence and that situation is not acceptable," he said.

He said inspectors from both the Department and the Consumer Council would be visiting wholesale and retail outlets to search for unsafe plugs.

Miss Lau said the Council was very concerned that retailers would attempt to dump items which carry unsafe plugs in the next six months before the law is enforced.

The product manager of home appliances for Fortress, Patrick Li Moon-pong, said from now on Fortress will ensure that all their new products carry plugs which comply with the new safety standards but will also be attempting to sell all their old stock before the new laws come into effect.

"We have already taken a lot of measures such as informing our suppliers to make them very clear on the new regulations," he said.

He said customers very rarely paid any attention to plugs when choosing an appliance and that they would be advised to do so from next March when the law is enforced.

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department has published a pamphlet available at all electricity offices outlining what to avoid when using adaptors and plugs.