

'Safety is a collective responsibility'

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A short-circuit in the basement of a hostel in Janakpuri, Delhi, caused the fire to spread to the ground and first floors. Five girls were injured. At the Trauma Centre of the All India Institute Of Medical Sciences, Delhi, a fire broke out in one of the operation theatres. Short-circuit is the reason that is suspected. A coaching centre in Surat caught fire, triggered by a short circuit and it led to the deaths of twenty people.

These are just a few incidents that have happened in the recent past. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics, at least 3,000 people die every year in electric power-related accidents in the country. 'Short circuit' and 'touching live wires' rank as the top two reasons for these accidents and the problem gets aggravated during natural calamities like floods. According to the NRRB, Delhi had the maximum number of short-circuit related fatalities over the last 10 years. The causes are faulty or sub-standard switchgear and electrical wiring. The ordinary conventional fuse which still enjoys 40 per cent market share can only perform the basic function of a short circuit and nothing beyond it.

This brings us to the crucial question – how can we safeguard our homes with sturdy protection devices and safe electrical wiring?

Switchgears are one of the most vital yet highly overlooked safety electrical equipment that can protect us from current leakage, voltage surge, short-circuits and overload. In a modern-day home, equipped up with various electrical and electronic equipment, a combination of switchgear is essential. It can isolate circuits, and

protect electrical equipment (and humans lives) as well, during abnormal conditions. But, switchgear occupies an inconspicuous place in the consumer mindshare. While a home buyer tends to invest heavily in his choice of aesthetics, décor and other gadgetry to create a comfortable living environment, investing in safe and robust electrical wiring, often takes a backseat.

So, we must pay attention to the safety and security of our home and family first. And especially with heavy showers and deluge often disrupting our daily lives, wiring your home with advanced electrical equipment is a necessity.

Residual current circuit breaker (RCCB) is a life-saving device, which detects any leakage in circuit and disconnects. It becomes all the more important for devices to be installed at wash-room, kitchen and laundry rooms as water and electricity don't mix well. Surge protection devices inhibit transient voltages and divert surges into the underground thereby protecting expensive electronics and appliances.

For instance, terrains with heavy rainfall, such as the coastal belt of Kerala, are often susceptible to thunderstorms and lightning. This causes frequent voltage surges which in turn can damage every single electric equipment in a house in a fraction of a second if surge protection is not part of the circuitry.

Safety is a collective responsibility and if ignored, can have fatal ramifications. It is always best to be 'safe' than 'sorry' and take precautions by safeguarding circuitry, appliances and inhabitants with adequate switchgear in advance, rather than doing damage control after an accident.

(The author is the president of Havells India Ltd)

