Consumer units explained

Why fuseboards get replaced, and what a modern 18th Edition consumer unit does for you



Old and potentially unsafe fuseboard



A modern 18th Edition consumer unit

> *"Electricity can and does kill. Every year, around **350,000 people are seriously injured** and **70 people are killed** because of an electrical accident in the home."*
>
> *Source: Electrical Safety First*

Why does my old fusebox need replacing when it has been fine for years?

This is a question we are often asked, and it is a fair one. Why pay hundreds of pounds to replace something that works?

The simple answer is that an old fuseboard does work, to an extent. It lets electricity reach your lighting and equipment.

> **However, if there is a fault, an old fuseboard might not keep you safe.**

Very old fuseboards protect a circuit using fuse wire. When too much current is drawn, the wire melts and the circuit disconnects. All too often the wrong fuse wire has been fitted, leaving circuits unprotected and vulnerable to house fires and electric shock.

A registered, insured electrician will usually be unable to add to or alter circuits protected by an old fuseboard, because new work has to meet the current Wiring Regulations (BS 7671), which an old fuseboard often cannot support.

> *"Electricity also causes more than **20,000 house fires** a year – almost half of all accidental house fires." Source: Electrical Safety First*

Who can install a replacement consumer unit?

A replacement consumer unit should only be installed by a qualified, insured and registered electrician. The work is notifiable, which means it has to be notified to your local building control. On completion you will receive an Electrical Installation Certificate, and a few days later your Building Control notification.

ABOUT JAY POOLEY

Jay Pooley is a qualified electrician with 20 years of experience in electrical contracting, design and installation. Jay owns and runs Greentec Electrical Ltd, which specialises in domestic electrical installations and fault-finding. He holds a range of testing and installation qualifications.

What benefits will I see from a new consumer unit?

PROTECTION	WHAT IT DOES
RCD protection	RCDs (Residual Current Devices) protect you from electric shock. They switch the supply off within 300 milliseconds if more than 30mA of current leaks to earth, for example through your body. That is quicker than a heartbeat.
MCBs	Miniature Circuit Breakers switch a circuit off within 0.4 seconds if a fault is detected, or if the circuit is overloaded.
RCBOs	An RCBO combines an RCD and an MCB in one device. It is the preferred option for most circuits, because a fault trips only the affected circuit.
SPD (surge protection)	A surge protection device is included in every consumer unit we fit. It can absorb a surge of electricity caused by a nearby lightning strike. Without one, every electrical device in your home could be damaged.
Fire-rated enclosure	All modern consumer units have a non-combustible enclosure. A large number of house fires start at the consumer unit, so a plastic unit carries a higher risk of fire.

GET IN TOUCH

Call **01892 457437** / **07763 730171**, email info@greentecelectrical.co.uk or visit www.greentecelectrical.co.uk.

Greentec Electrical Ltd is based in Tunbridge Wells and serves Kent and East Sussex.