



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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## Press Statement

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### **DANGEROUS AND UNREGULATED ELECTRONIC/ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS IN MARKET**

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is surprised at how unregulated electrical products can continue to be available in the market. This problem has been highlighted by CAP umpteen times over the years.

There are an alarming number of electronic/electrical products without the Energy Commission-SIRIM label that are being blatantly sold in the market.

More shockingly, the Energy Commission (EC) List of Regulated Electrical Equipment did not include many other products that are commonly used.

Items such as current converters (from alternating to direct current), power supply units in computers, and rechargeable batteries should be regulated because they involve 240 volt alternate current and known to be a potential explosive and a fire hazard in the case of rechargeable batteries.

Even the most common items such as electrical cables do not have either EC or SIRIM approval logo and the Electrical and Electronics Association of Malaysia (TEEAM) had cautioned that many electrical cables manufactured from "poor quality material" has inundated the market.

Substandard electrical cables used in homes are prone to overheating and fire. TEEAM recommended property owners to engage contractors who are certified by EC or a government agency. But how many house owners are aware of who these contractors are and if there is an easy-to-access directory for consumers to search for certified contractors?

According to the Malaysian Electricity Regulations 1994, a Certificate of Approval (CoA) is required for the importation, retail, advertising or manufacturing of electrical appliances or equipment. Even with CoA from EC, the products have to be sent to the Certification Body Testing Laboratory (CBTL) for consignment test and verification.

If the products fail the test, they will either be returned to its country of origin or be disposed. It is only when the products are tested and verified that EC-SIRIM safety assurance labels are then affixed onto the products. With that the approved products are allowed to be marketed in the country.

With such stringent regulations, it is amazing how the EC and the Customs can allow non EC-SIRIM approved electric products to flood the market. With the existence of such substandard products, consumers are put at high risk of home fires or being electrocuted.

Moreover, it is questionable why adapters/chargers require EC-SIRIM safety assurance labels but rechargeable batteries are not in the 2014 list of “regulated electrical equipment”.

Mobile phones have been around in Malaysia for about 20 years; e-cigarettes, more than 10 years; and power banks, five years. Such devices run on rechargeable lithium-ion batteries and the United Nation’s International Civil Aviation Organization imposed a temporary ban (1 April 2016 till sometime in 2018) on cargo shipment of such batteries by passenger planes. The reason is due to the fear that the batteries can overheat and cause fires or explosions on airplanes.

The home is supposed to be the safest place but, ironically, 2,717 homes were razed in 2014 and 139 of the fire victims died and 389 of them injured. It was found that 55 per cent of structure fires were caused by electrical problems (arcs, sparks/short circuit, over current/overload and resistance heating).

In fact fire investigations showed that one of the major factors of fires is associated with electrical wiring problems.

Examples of cases involving electrical/electronics equipment mishaps in Malaysia are:

- On 8 May 2016, an entertainment journalist’s daughter’s smartphone exploded while being charged at her Setiawangsa home.
- On 19 April 2016, a 30-year-old woman from Cheras was killed from electrocution while using a smartphone that was being charged.
- A few days after the Cheras case, a 28-year-old Kedahan suffered injuries when his smartphone exploded when he answered an incoming call on his smartphone that was being charged.
- In mid-November 2015, a man in Gopeng required 6 stitches on his lips after his e-cigarette exploded while in use.
- On 25 October 2015, an electronic cigarette device caught fire on a Malindo Air flight en route from Kota Kinabalu to Kuala Lumpur.
- In August 2014, a pharmacist was electrocuted while taking a hot shower at her home in Segamat, Johor.

In view of the consequences – possible injuries, death through explosion, fire, or electrocution– the Consumers’ Association of Penang (CAP) reiterates that:

- The EC and SIRIM should review and expand their list of regulated products as many of the electrical products are not regulated by the EC.
- At the same time, EC should also raid the market for substandard electrical products that carry fake EC-SIRIM safety assurance labels.

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