



COUNTERFEIT ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS

Combat Counterfeits

Every day, counterfeit electrical products are finding their way into our homes, businesses, and public institutions. These fraudulent products pose a serious financial and legal liability to the electrical industry, and they have become a grave safety crisis for our communities — a crisis that requires immediate action.

Although counterfeits may appear to be identical to their original counterparts, these products are often made using inferior materials and without normal safety provisions.

Undetected counterfeit products such as circuit breakers, batteries, extension cords, and holiday lights can cause fires, shocks, explosions, and electrocutions.

Safety Tips

- Purchase electrical products from reputable retailers that obtain their goods from legitimate distributors and authorized manufacturers. Avoid purchasing electrical products at deep discount stores, flea markets, or bargain warehouses.
- Exercise caution in online transactions. The convenience and anonymity of online shopping have contributed to the dramatic increase in counterfeit inventory in the United States.
- Check for certification marks. Quality electrical products should be certified by nationally-recognized testing laboratories for safety. Look for certification marks from nationally recognized testing laboratories such as UL, CSA, and ETL.

- Scrutinize product labels and packaging. Product packaging and warning labels offer a valuable source of information and may reveal important telltale warning signs. Make sure that labels and packaging are free of grammatical errors, and that any information provided is consistent with information elsewhere on the package.
- Avoid products that lack any identifying brand label or affiliation. Make sure that the name and contact information of the manufacturer is clearly displayed on the packaging and/or the product. Legitimate manufacturers are proud of their products and stand by them. If this information is missing, then consider an alternative product or retailer.
- Trust your instincts. Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. Counterfeiters often use inferior materials and avoid key manufacturing steps to reduce the cost of their products significantly. Electrical products sold at extremely low prices may be a sign that the product is counterfeit.
- Be proactive. Organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) provide up-to-date information about product recalls on their web sites. These publicly searchable databases track detailed descriptions of product appearance, conditions of sale, make, model, hazard, and distributor.

Facts & Statistics

- North American electrical product counterfeiting is estimated to be in the \$300-400 million range.
- Less than one-third of Americans are aware that counterfeit electrical products such as batteries, extension cords, and circuit breakers even exist. (Source: *The Gallup Organization*)
- The CPSC has recalled more than one million counterfeit electrical products in recent years.
- Sixty percent of Americans recently surveyed by ESFI admitted to being unable to distinguish between an original and a counterfeit electrical product.
- Sixty-four percent of counterfeit electrical products are purchased from authorized retailers.