

Safety Alert –January 2024

Subject: Electrical Hazards Inside Ceiling Spaces at UNSW

EM Safety are issuing a Safety Alert to remind all UNSW staff members of the electrical risks related to working inside ceiling spaces at UNSW.

Background:

There have been two incidents involving UNSW staff members accessing ceiling spaces on campus.

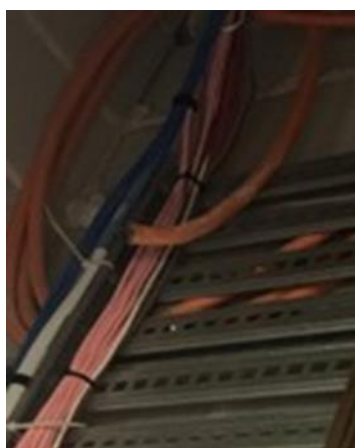
In the first incident in May 2023, a staff member was installing cabling in the F10 Science Theatre. While reaching inside the ceiling space, they received an electric shock from an exposed live terminal. The subsequent investigation found a dated electrical installation comprising Bakelite power outlets with exposed live parts. It was impossible for the staff member to see this danger. Fortunately, they were checked at hospital and medically cleared.

In a second incident in December 2023, a staff member entered a ceiling space to assist EM electrical contractors who were tracing cables. As the staff member removed a ceiling tile a pair of live, unterminated cables fell onto them. Luckily, nobody was injured, and the exposed cables were made safe by the electrical contractors.

There have also been other incidents where contractors have identified live, unterminated cables inside ceiling spaces at UNSW. In all cases, the identified hazards have been made safe, but ceiling spaces at UNSW are a known hazard.

Actions for UNSW Staff members:

- Under no circumstances should UNSW staff members be entering ceiling spaces or removing ceiling tiles.
- Please engage only licenced electricians to carry out electrical work inside ceiling spaces. A licenced electrician will risk assess the job prior to commencing work.



Corresponding author for this alert: r.janes@unsw.edu.au