

What Is a Contractor's Isolator?

A contractor's isolator is a switch installed between your electricity meter and consumer unit, allowing the electrical supply to be safely turned off without removing the main fuse.

It allows the electrical supply to be safely turned off without removing the main fuse from the supply cut-out.

This provides a safe and controlled way to isolate the installation when carrying out electrical work.

How to Tell If You Already Have One

You may already have a contractor's isolator if there is a switch located between your electricity meter and your consumer unit.

It will usually:

- Be a clearly labelled switch
- Have an ON/OFF position
- Be located close to the meter

If you're unsure, this can be checked during a visit or by sending a photo.



Why This Is Checked Before Work Starts

Identifying whether an isolator is present is an important part of planning a consumer unit upgrade.

If one is not already installed, this may:

- Require a separate visit before the main work
- Affect scheduling
- Add additional cost

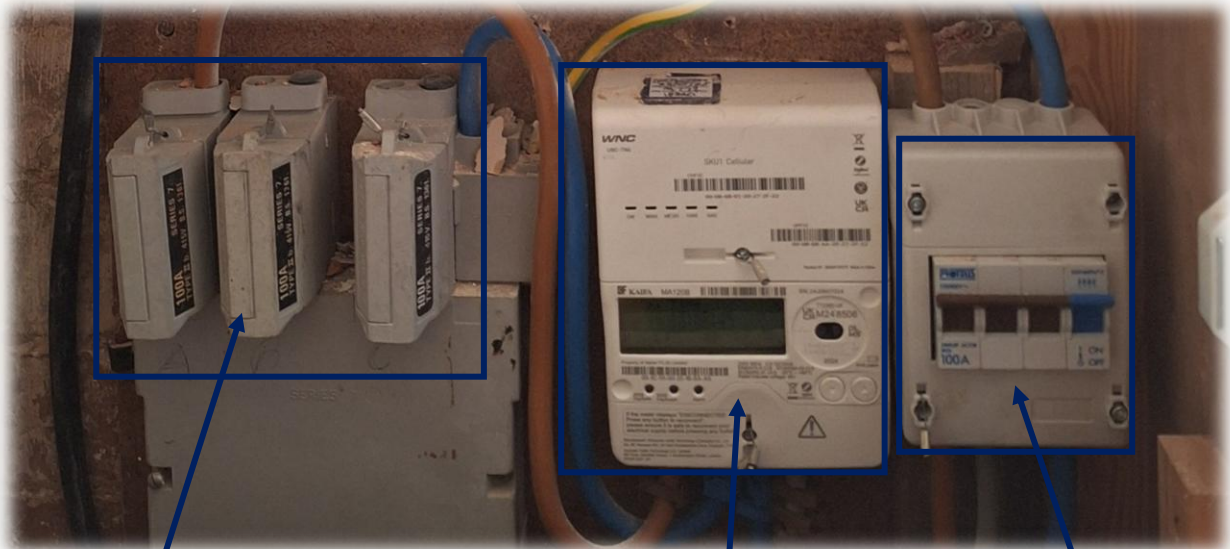
Checking this early helps avoid delays and ensures the work can be carried out safely and helps ensure your installation can be safely isolated on the day of the work without delays.

Understanding Your Main Incoming Supply

The main electrical supply into your property is provided and maintained by a company known as the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

The DNO is responsible for bringing electricity into your property and maintaining the equipment up to your meter.

The image below shows a typical 3 phase setup, highlighting the main components of your incoming supply.



Fuse Cut-out:

This is the point where electricity enters your property and is protected by the main fuse

Owned by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).

Must not be tampered with.

Removing the fuse is not considered a safe or legitimate method of isolation.

Electricity Meter:

This records your electricity usage.

Owned by your energy supplier.

Must not be interfered with or bypassed.

Breaking seals or tampering can lead to serious issues.

Contractor's Isolator Switch:

This is installed between the meter and the consumer unit.

Provides a safe and legitimate way to isolate the supply.

Allows work to be carried out without interfering with DNO equipment.

This is the point electricians use to safely isolate the installation.

Why This Matters

When replacing a consumer unit, the supply needs to be fully isolated.

Without an isolator, there is often no safe or legitimate way to do this without accessing the main fuse, which is not permitted.

A contractor's isolator allows the installation to be safely isolated without interfering with sealed or owned equipment.

Who Can Install an Isolator?

A contractor's isolator is typically installed by:

- Your energy supplier
- The electricity network operator (DNO)

In most domestic situations, this is not work that can be carried out by your electrician.

Arrangements for installation will depend on your supplier and the type of incoming supply.

Is There a Cost?

In many cases, there may be a cost to have an isolator installed.

- Some DNOs charge for this work
- Some energy suppliers will install one free of charge
- In some cases, it may be included as part of other works

It is always worth checking with your supplier first.

How to Arrange an Isolator Installation

You can usually request an isolator by contacting your energy supplier in the first instance.

If required, they will either arrange the work directly or advise if the DNO needs to attend.

What to Say When You Call

You can keep this simple:

"I'm having my consumer unit replaced and have been advised that I may need a contractor's isolator switch installed between the meter and the fuse board. Can you confirm if this can be arranged?"

If they ask for more detail:

"My electrician has advised that the installation needs to be safely isolated without removing the main fuse."

Local Contacts (Nottinghamshire Area)

For properties in Nottinghamshire, your electricity network operator is typically:

National Grid Electricity Distribution (formerly Western Power Distribution)

They can be contacted via:

- General enquiries: 0800 096 3080
- Website: [nationalgrid.co.uk](https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk)

Your energy supplier (the company you pay your bill to) should always be your first point of contact.

In Summary

A contractor's isolator provides a safe and legitimate way to isolate your electrical supply without interfering with the main fuse or meter.

It is often required for consumer unit upgrades and helps ensure work can be completed safely and in line with current regulations.

If you're unsure whether your property has an isolator, feel free to get in touch or send a photo of your meter and fuse board setup - we'll be happy to advise.