Choices at Home and Safety on the Job Fatality Report

Man dies charging iPhone while in the bath

A man was electrocuted as he charged his mobile phone while in the bath, an inquest has heard.

Richard Bull, 32, died when his iPhone charger made contact with the water at his home in Ealing, west London.

A coroner ruled his death was accidental and plans to send a report to Apple about taking action to prevent future deaths.

Safety campaigners have warned about the dangers of charging mobiles near water following the inquest.

Mr Bull is believed to have plugged his charger into an extension cord from the hallway and rested it on his chest while using the phone, the Sun reports.

He suffered severe burns on his chest, arm and hand when the charger touched the water and died on 11 December, the newspaper said.

Charity Electrical Safety First said the death highlighted some of the dangers of having electrical appliances around water.

Product safety manager Steve Curtler said people would not get electrocuted from a mobile appliance such as a laptop or mobile phone if it was not being charged.

Such devices typically have a low voltage of 5V to 20V so “you probably wouldn’t feel it” if they came into contact with water, he added.

However, connecting a mobile phone to a charger plugged into the mains electricity supply increases the risk of harm.

“Although the cable that is plugged in to your phone is 5V,

somewhere along the line it’s plugged into the electricity supply and you’re reliant on that cable and a transformer to make sure you don’t get into contact with the main voltage,” said Mr Curtler.

He said cheap, non-branded chargers may not offer such protection, but even with genuine chargers you are still taking an unnecessary risk.

“You’re wet, which conducts electricity a lot better; you’re in the bath with no clothes on, so skin resistance is less. You’re vulnerable in the bathroom.”

Note: It would be better if the “accident” had occurred while “working from home”, or, the accident occurred in non-working hours (ie) 5:PM to 6:AM