

Kickstart

Gets you started on key issues:

- What are the issues?
- Does it affect us?
- What do we do next?

There are a number of laws which place a duty on both employers and employees to ensure the safety of the workplace. We need to extend this duty to cover all persons who come onto our premises and ensure that our electrical wiring and our portable appliances are tested and inspected to an accepted Code of Practice.

Electrical testing

Does it affect me?

There are a number of laws e.g. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which place a duty on both employers and employees to ensure the safety of the workplace.

This affects **all employers**, large or small, and includes responsibility for portable appliances brought into the premises by employees or contractors.

What are the standards?

The IEE regulations and Codes of Practice are the normally accepted guidelines to work to, although they are not 'statutory instruments' themselves. Apart from a need, in any case, to ensure that none of our equipment is a danger to people using our premises, a serious issue would arise if someone was injured through inadvertent contact with electricity and there was no record of tests having been carried out.

Both the fixed wiring (the wiring incorporated into the building) and the portable appliances (anything with a plug on) need to be inspected and where appropriate tested at regular intervals, as well being maintained in between times.

Equipment categories

- S** Stationary, e.g. rarely moved photocopiers, fax machines
- IT** IT, e.g. desktop computers, VDUs
- M** Movable equipment, e.g. some cleaning equipment
- P** Portable, e.g.
- H** Handheld, e.g. kettles, some cleaning equipment

Type of premises	Type	User checks	Class I (not double-insulated, or not known)		Class II (double-insulated)	
			Formal visual	Combined inspect/test	Formal visual	Combined inspect/test
Equipment used by the public	S	For some equipment, e.g. children's rides, daily check may be required	Monthly	1 year	3 months	1 year
	IT		Monthly	1 year	3 months	1 year
	M		Weekly	6 months	1 month	1 year
	P		Weekly	6 months	1 month	1 year
Schools	S	Weekly	None	1 year	1 year	2 years
	IT	Weekly	None	1 year	1 year	2 years
	M	Weekly	4 months	1 year	4 months	2 years
	P	Weekly	4 months	1 year	4 months	2 years
Offices and shops	S	None	2 years	4 years	4 months	None
	IT	None	2 years	4 years	2 years	None
	M	Weekly	1 year	2 years	2 years	None
	P	Weekly	1 year	2 years	2 years	None
	H	Each use	6 months	1 year	6 months	None
						None

From IEE 'Electrical Maintenance including Portable Appliance Testing'

Cables, leads, extension leads: treat as per the item they are powering.

Portable appliance testing (PAT)

The period of inspection and testing varies depending on the category of appliance and type of premise (see table). There are 3 levels of testing, advised by the HSE:

- User checks** – e.g. damage to the power lead insulation, the plug itself, the cable retention, evidence of overheating or water damage.
- Formal visual inspections** – by a trained 'competent person', checking e.g. the fuse and plug wiring.
- Combined inspection and testing** – testing requires specialist equipment costing from around £500. A person with a basic understanding of electricity and an aptitude to practical work can be readily trained to do this. If the PAT tester shows a simple pass/fail reading then the person requires no specialist training.

A simple system is recommended:

1. Identify who is responsible for testing.

2. Keep a log book of both Formal Visual Inspections and Combined Inspection and Testing.
3. Label equipment with next due date for test/inspection.

Fixed wiring inspection

This is more complex and is required at 1-5 year intervals depending on the use of the premises. We suggest you consult an Electrician! In lease premises this may be the responsibility of the landlord.

More information

The IEE booklet 'Electrical Maintenance including Portable Appliance Testing' (ISBN 085296 851 5) covers the main issues. The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL, Telephone (0171) 240 1871 Training courses and testers are available from Instrotech, Watford. (Telephone 0500 837837).

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