

Portable Electrical Equipment

Introduction

Regulations

The Regulations covering the maintenance of portable electrical equipment are the Electricity at Work Regulations (NI) 1991 which require portable electrical equipment to be maintained in a safe condition. The duty is qualified by the words '*so far as is reasonably practicable*'.

Portable electrical equipment testing is a delegated item under LMS and as such the onus is on the Board of Governors to ensure the relevant safety inspections are carried out.

Recommended testing intervals

The Employing Authority Policy for Portable Appliance testing has been agreed with the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and applies to low risk environments only. Schools are deemed to be in this category.

Portable Appliance Testing is a duty placed upon the Employer and schools. Schools are required to engage in a contract for the examination and testing of portable appliances.

The exception to this requirement is where a school has staff who have been fully trained in testing appliances. They should also have appropriate equipment to carry out the tests. When the tests have been completed the school should have a register of equipment which is required to be maintained.

The importance of user checks

All persons using equipment can be instructed to recognise visual signs that indicate the equipment is not in sound condition, e.g.:

1. The plug is damaged, e.g. the casing is cracked or the pins are bent;
2. The outer sheath of the cable is not effectively secured where it enters the plug or the equipment. Obvious evidence would be if the coloured insulation of the internal cable cores was showing;
3. There is damage to the external casing of the equipment or there are some loose parts or screws;
4. There is damage (apart from light scuffing) to the cable sheath or taped joints;
5. The equipment has been subjected to conditions for which it is not suitable, e.g. it is wet;
6. There is evidence of overheating.

Inventory

A list of all Portable Electrical Appliances in the school is required together with the type, serial number and location.

The inventory must be kept up to date between inspection dates and available to the Health and Safety Section or Health and Safety Executive Inspectors on request.

Formal visual inspection

This may be carried out by a competent member of staff. A record of the inspection must be maintained.

Staff property

Electrical items owned by staff members are not to be brought into the school unless they have a current Test Certificate (i.e. within the last six months). In all cases the Principal is to be made aware of the intention to use 'private' electrical equipment in the School.

User check intervals

Equipment/Environment	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Battery operated (less than 20 volts AC)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage (less than 50 volts AC), e.g. telephone equipment, low voltage desk lights.	No	No	No
Information Technology, e.g. desktop computers & VDU screens.	No	Yes, 2-4 years	No if doubled insulated - otherwise up to 5 years
Photocopiers, fax machines, tumble driers, washing machines, not hand held. Rarely moved.	No	Yes, 2-4 years	No if doubled insulated - otherwise up to 5 years
Double insulated equipment: Not hand held. Moved occasionally, e.g. fans, table lamps, slide projectors.	No	Yes, 2-4 years	No
Double insulated equipment: Hand held, (moved regularly) e.g. drills, sanders, jigsaws, hand grinders, and multi-volt lab units, transformers, food mixers, food processors, plastic electric kettles, electric knives/tin openers and some floor cleaners.	Yes	Yes, 6 months - 1 year	No
Earthed equipment (Class I): e.g. electric kettles, smoothing irons, soldering irons.	Yes	Yes, 6 months - 1 year	Yes, 1-2 years
Cables (leads) and plugs connected to the above. Extension leads (mains voltage).	Yes	Yes, 6 months - 4 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to.	Yes, 1- 5 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to.