

Portable Electrical Appliances Procedures

Description

Portable electrical appliances are found in most workplaces and include power tools, portable lighting, computer equipment, kitchen appliances, portable heaters, and equipment such as cable extension leads. Where equipment is powered from the mains electrical supply there may be a significant electrical hazard that will need to be specifically controlled.



Associated Hazards

- Shock or burns
- Uncontrolled start-up of equipment
- Fire or explosion
- Trips and falls.

Employer's Responsibilities

- Undertake a risk assessment for using the applicable portable electrical appliance for the task required and implement suitable safe systems of work to control the risks
- Ensure that trained and competent persons undertake the work
- For equipment connected to power sources either use "double insulated" or earthed cables and ensure cables are protected against damage
- Ensure that equipment is regularly maintained by following the manufacturer's instructions
- Ensure users visually check equipment before and during use
- Regularly undertake, by trained appointed persons, formal visual inspections of the equipment including inspection of the plug and its assembly
- Carry out combined inspection and testing by electrically competent persons at frequencies required by the risk assessment. A register of such inspections will be kept
- Remove from use or arrange for the repair of any appliance that fails any inspection, test, or other checks
- Where required by risk assessment, provide additional precautions such as suitably robust residual current devices (RCD's), 110v reduced voltage equipment, etc
- Ensure that the power supply is within the operating range of the appliance
- Ensure that, where provided, guards and protective covers are in place and kept in good condition.
- Employees/Sub-Contractors Responsibilities
- Visually check the equipment before and during use looking for signs of faults, overheating or damage to the equipment including to the wiring, plugs, casing and any guarding
- Immediately stop work if faults are found and report any defects to the supervisor
- Do not carry out any repairs or adjustments to equipment unless trained to do so
- Take care of the equipment that has been provided
- Disconnect the equipment from the supply before making any adjustments
- Ensure that equipment is plugged into the correct supply by an approved method, do not attempt to use a makeshift temporary connection.

Suggested initial intervals for checking portable electrical equipment

Equipment/environment	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Battery-operated: (less than 40 volts)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage: (less than 50 volts AC): Telephone equipment, low-voltage desk-lights	No	No	No
Desktop computers, VDU screens	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Photocopiers, fax machines: Not hand-held. Rarely moved	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Double insulated  (Class II) equipment: Not hand-held. Moved occasionally, eg fans, table lamps	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No
Double insulated  (Class II) equipment: Hand-held, eg some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 1 year	No
Earthed equipment (Class I): Electric kettles, some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment and irons	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 1 year	Yes, 1–2 years
Cables (leads and plugs connected to the above) and mains voltage extension leads and battery-charging equipment	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

Class II equipment is marked with a symbol as shown above of a box within a box. If you cannot see this symbol, you should assume that the item is a Class I appliance and carry out a portable appliance test.

For further guidance, go to <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>