



SOLUTIONS

THE SAFETY OF PORTABLE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

There is an army of businesses out there queuing to test your portable electrical appliances known as PAT (Portable Appliance Test). The rates charged can be anywhere from £1 to £7 per appliance.

However, the law (The Electricity at Work Regulations) does not require electrical equipment to be tested but does require it to be maintained. A visual inspection is often all that is required. By concentrating on a simple inexpensive system of looking for visible signs of damage or faults, and putting them right, you will prevent most electrical accidents from occurring.

These checks can be done by any sensible (competent) member of staff if they have been given enough knowledge and training. They need to know what to look at, what to look for and what to do - they should have basic electrical knowledge together with common sense, e.g. switch off and unplug the equipment first! The free HSE booklet: 'Maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low risk environments' is a good starting point in gaining the required knowledge and is available on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg236.pdf

However, some faults cannot be seen just by looking, particularly lack of continuous earths and for some equipment the earth is essential to safety. Therefore all earthed equipment, and most leads and plugs connected to equipment, should also have an occasional combined inspection and test to look for these and other faults.

To summarise, not all electrical appliances need testing but all need a periodic visual check. The visual checks and the testing can be done by a competent person within your organisation or by an external electrician. When using an external electrician you need to ask them to check and test appliances in line with the HSE guidance referred to above and not to test everything and not necessarily every year.

Keeping an inventory of all electrical appliances is good business sense and also allows you to ensure all appliance checks and tests are carried out and recorded.

Are you aware of what you need to do to comply to health & safety legislation? For a free review of your safety procedures and policy call us today on 0845 053 3666 or email advice@hsdept.co.uk

