

Electricity Policy

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Scope

This policy describes the arrangements for fixed wiring installations and portable appliances.

Policy Summary

Electricity can be deadly. It can cause electric shock, fire and burns. It is essential, therefore, that responsibilities are taken seriously and that any work on electrical installations or equipment is carried out by competent (skilled) personnel.

Responsibilities

Manager Responsibility

Managers are responsible for ensuring that employees and other workers know the extent of their responsibilities. They are responsible for ensuring that only competent (skilled) personnel carry out work, including testing, on electrical installations and equipment.

Managers should discourage employees from bringing in their own electrical appliances and must in any case, not allow electrical equipment to be connected to the premises electrical supply unless free from defects.

Managers should ensure that regular visual checks take place to ensure that all electrical equipment appears to be in good order and safe to use.

Managers should ensure that, where Residual Current Devices (RCDs) are part of the fixed wiring system, they are tested by operation of the test button every 3 months.

Plug in socket protectors/covers/blanking plugs must not be used.

Particular attention should be given to ensure that multiple socket outlets are not overloaded, and that too many portable appliances are not connected. Where possible, electrical appliances should be plugged into individual socket outlets which are part of the building's fixed wiring installation. If a situation arises where more appliances need to be connected than there are socket outlets, at a particular location, then consideration should be given to the installation of additional fixed outlets. However, it is recognised that it will not always be practicable to make this provision in the required timescales, and so temporary arrangements can be made, but the following requirements must be met:

- Devices (sometimes called "Adaptors") which plug directly into the socket outlet allowing multiple appliances to be directly connected must not be used. These cause undue mechanical loading on the socket outlet and are likely to cause damage, resulting in fire.
- Extension leads with multiple outlets may be used but they:
 - Must be correctly fused,
 - Must be included in the user checks and portable appliance testing,
 - Must be arranged so that they are not likely to be damaged (e.g. kicking under desks, trapped between furniture), or to present a tripping hazard.
 - Must be fully uncoiled when in use.
 - Must not be used where the total load is likely to exceed their rated capacity,
 - Must not be daisy chained, i.e. they must not be plugged into one another.

Employee Responsibility

Employees must not bring in their own electrical equipment without the permission of their manager.

Where RCDs are used they must be tested, by operation of the test button before each use.

All users of electrical equipment are required to carry out user checks as shown below. They must check for:

- damage, e.g. cuts, abrasion (apart from light scuffing) to the cable covering;
- damage to the plug, e.g. the casing is cracked or the pins are bent;

- non-standard joints including taped joints in the cable;
- the outer covering (sheath) of the cable not being gripped where it enters the plug or the equipment and look to make sure the coloured insulation of the internal wires is not showing;
- equipment that has been used in conditions where it is not suitable, e.g. a wet or dusty workplace;
- damage to the outer cover of the equipment or obvious loose parts or screws;
- over-heating (burn marks or staining).

Where there is any suspicion that electrical equipment is unsafe it must be taken out of service and labelled “UNSAFE - DO NOT USE”. Measures should be taken to prevent its use until it has been checked and made safe by a competent electrician.

Users must switch off and unplug electrical equipment when unattended, unless continuous operation is necessary.

NO NAS EMPLOYEE, CONTRACTOR OR ANY OTHER PERSON WITHOUT A SUITABLE QUALIFICATION OR PERMIT WILL, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, BE PERMITTED TO WORK ON ANY ELECTRICAL SYSTEM OR EQUIPMENT.

It is essential that the competences of employees that usually undertake simple electrical tasks at work (replacing fuses, light bulbs, fluorescent tubes etc.) are assessed to ensure that they have the required knowledge and skills to undertake such tasks. It is essential that they understand the significance of isolation and the importance of ensuring that electrical systems are not live and are locked off before any work is carried out. The competency of individuals undertaking these tasks needs to match the risk. For example, changing a light bulb in a desk lamp requires little technical skill but accessing a fluorescent light fitting and changing the tube will require the individual to be aware of the electrical hazards and those associated with working at height.

Electrical Testing

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

All portable electrical appliances on NAS premises should normally be tested and inspected annually, but in staff areas where the appliances are unlikely to be easily damaged (e.g. Offices) then, at the responsible manager’s discretion, this can be extended to two years, for the following types of equipment:

- IT Equipment, e.g. computers, printers and monitors,

- Stationary Equipment, e.g. photocopies, dishwashers and refrigerators

The period cannot be extended for schools, where test and inspection must be undertaken at least annually.

Where the frequency for test and inspection has been extended to two years, the manager must be sure that employees are carrying out the regular user checks, as shown above.

Electrical equipment brought on to NAS premises which is not new must be subjected to test and inspection before it is used. This requirement includes equipment belonging to people supported by the NAS.

The tests and inspections must be conducted by competent, skilled, personnel, and should normally be carried out under contract. Exceptionally, NAS employees or individuals supported by the NAS, can carry out the tests and inspections but they must be trained to the required standard (City and Guilds 2377), and registered with the Maintenance Manager, who will ensure that all competency criteria are met and that a monitoring process is put in place to ensure ongoing competency.

Portable appliance testing equipment must be calibrated at least every 12 months, and the certificate made available for inspection.

A register of tested appliances must be kept on site and must be readily available for inspection.

Microwave Oven Leakage Tests

These should be incorporated into the portable appliance testing programme.

Fixed Wiring

The fixed wiring installations in premises owned or leased by the NAS must be tested and inspected by a NICEIC registered contractor at intervals not exceeding five years. Remedial action must be taken to correct any defects, and records must be maintained, and made available for inspection.

People Being Supported Risks

Where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that an individual may interfere with socket outlets, switches or other electrical devices and equipment then suitable protective measures must be introduced, following risk assessment, e.g. use of residual current devices (RCDs) in distribution boards to protect socket outlets.

Fluorescent lamps should not be used where there is a risk that these would have an adverse effect on people the NAS supports.

Non-NAS Locations

There are many other situations where those working on behalf of the NAS could be exposed to electrical hazards in Non-NAS locations. For example:

- Providing a service to someone in their own home
- Training venues
- Befriending
- Fundraising events
- Working from home

It will not necessarily be possible, or appropriate, to carry out the same tests and inspections of portable appliances or fixed wiring. However, the user checks described in this policy under the heading “Employee Responsibilities” must be carried out. If for any reason the electrical appliances or fixed wiring appear to be unsafe then they must not be used, and any deficiencies must be reported immediately to the line manager.

It is preferable, and generally more acceptable, to carry out a visual inspection of electrical safety before committing NAS employees or volunteers to the provision of a service, or event, etc.

Disposal of portable electrical equipment for use by people and organisations outside of The NAS must only be undertaken following proper test and inspection.

Key Management Actions

- See “Managers’ Responsibility”