

# Electricity and gas safety.

## Schools Safety Guide

### Document information

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## 1. Introduction

This school safety guide gives a simple overview of electricity and gas safety issues and the checks that should be taking place within a school environment. These checks should be carried out alongside the school's internal procedures for reporting and recording of any defects.

Each school will need to ensure that a nominated person (the premise manager) is responsible for checking that inspections/servicing has been carried out at the relevant intervals and that records are kept.

## 2. Portable electrical appliance testing

The Electricity at Work Regulations require all electrical equipment to be maintained so that it is safe; however, this doesn't necessarily mean that all equipment has to be tested.

For most office and other low risk equipment, HSE's advice is that **visual checks** (by the user) for obvious signs of damage and perhaps simple tests (a **formal visual inspection**) by a competent member of staff are sufficient to prevent danger; however, for other equipment such as earthed appliances (e.g. kettles and some floor cleaners), or extension leads, a **combined inspection/test**, by a suitably trained person, at appropriate intervals will be required.

A **formal visual inspection** mainly looks for obvious damage; however, it may also include removal of the plug cover to check the fuse, cord grip, and integrity of the connections within the plug as well as ensuring the wires are connected correctly; consequently, anyone who undertakes these checks must be competent with appropriate basic electrical knowledge and training in what to look for and the precautions to take (e.g. ensuring the equipment is unplugged).

In practice, many schools find it convenient to have **formal visual inspections** done by the same person who carries out the **combined inspection and testing**; this is often carried out by a contractor but could be carried out by suitably trained school staff (see Training below).

HSE guidance on maintaining portable electric equipment in offices and other low-risk environments, includes suggested inspection intervals. A link can be found in Further Information section of this guide.

### Higher risk equipment

Whilst most equipment in schools is low risk office equipment, some will be subject to greater wear and tear (e.g. floor buffers) or will be used in potentially corrosive environments (e.g. laboratory equipment). This equipment may require more frequent inspection and testing to ensure it remains safe.

## Portable appliance register

Any formal inspection and testing carried out should be recorded; a portable appliance register is ideal for this purpose. To avoid confusion, all equipment should be uniquely identifiable in the register.

## 3. Fixed equipment

Not all electrical equipment is portable, for example heavy duty kitchen equipment and traditional wood and metal working equipment is often connected directly into the mains supply, rather than plugged in. This equipment should also be checked periodically.

## 4. Electrical installation

The electrical wiring within or, in certain cases, external to a building should be tested periodically by a competent electrical engineer to ensure that it is safe. For most commercial premises, such as schools, the suggested intervals between periodic tests and inspection is five years; although for leisure facilities and swimming pools, the period is less.

High voltage switch gear/transformers require regular maintenance i.e. annual test/service by a competent contractor

## 5. Gas safety

All gas appliances are required to have an annual gas safety check carried out by a "Gas Safe Register" registered contractor under the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations.

In addition, gas boilers require an annual service by a "Gas Safe Register" registered contractor under the same regulations.

## 6. Records

Each premise should keep records (e.g. combined PAT tests, fixed electrical checks, gas appliance servicing etc) of the inspection and maintenance of electrical and gas appliances. Good practice is to keep current and previous records. A sample premise logbook for recording such information has been produced by the HSU.

## 7. Training

School employees who are undertaking combined inspection and testing of electrical equipment should hold a City & Guilds 2377/002 Portable Appliance Testing certificate or equivalent.

## 8. Further information

Please contact the health & safety unit if you require further information on electricity or gas safety.

See selection and use of contractors SSG for more information.

Further information on electricity and gas safety is also available on HSE's website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/index.htm>

Specific guidance is available on maintaining portable electric equipment in low risk environments: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg236.pdf>