



PAT – Portable Appliance Testing

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is the term used to describe the examination of electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use. Most electrical safety defects can be found by visual examination but some types of defect can only be found by testing.

A relatively brief user check (based upon simple training and perhaps assisted by the use of a brief checklist) can be a very useful part of any electrical maintenance regime. However, more formal visual inspection and testing by a competent person may also be required at appropriate intervals, depending upon the type of equipment and the environment in which it is used

Main Points

There are many common myths about portable appliance testing.
Below are some of the most frequent questions:-

How frequently do I need to test my electrical appliances?

The frequency of inspection and testing depends upon the type of equipment and the environment it is used in. For example, a power tool used on a construction site should be examined more frequently than a lamp in a hotel bedroom.

Do I need to keep records of testing and should I label any appliances tested?

There is no legal requirement to label equipment that has been inspected or tested, nor is there a requirement to keep records of these activities. However, a record and/or labelling can be a useful management tool for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the maintenance scheme and to demonstrate that a scheme exists.

Do I need to test new equipment?

New equipment should be supplied in a safe condition and not require a formal portable appliance inspection or test. However, a simple visual check is recommended to verify the items is not damaged.

I have been told that I have to get an electrician to do portable appliance testing work. Is that correct?

The person doing testing work needs to be competent to do it. In many low-risk environments, a sensible (competent) member of staff can undertake visual inspections and testing, a greater level of knowledge and experience is needed, and the person will need

- the right equipment to do the tests
- the ability to use this test equipment properly
- the ability to properly understand the test results

Is Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) compulsory?

No. The law simply requires an employer to ensure that their electrical equipment is maintained in order to prevent danger. It does not say how this should be done or how often. Employers should take a risk-based approach, considering the type of equipment and what it is being used for. If it is used regularly and moved a lot e.g. a floor cleaning or a kettle, testing (along with visual checks) can be an important part of an effective maintenance regime giving employers confidence that they are doing what is necessary to help them meet their legal duties.

It is fair to say that PAT testing is not defined by its own law but as a tool to ensure safety and compliance with work regulations and also as employer it gives clean piece of mind, knowing that all electrical items that you and your staff members, operators and general public use are safe and fit for purpose and not a risk of causing damage or harm to people and premises.

Talk to Atlas about Safety Management for your business

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