

UK PAT Testing

PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) testing is the testing of portable appliances, for instance P.C.s, toasters and kettles, to ensure that they are safe to use at a place of employment. Employers should carry out PAT testing in all places of work that have portable appliances, even if the appliances are only for hire or loan.

PAT testing is a legal requirement coming from various pieces of legislation, for instance the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

The various pieces of legislation, regulations, case law and recommendations have led to an 'industry standard' set of guidelines, the main points of which are:

- A portable appliance is anything that can plug into an electrical socket and can move. This includes items such as PCs, toasters, televisions and specialist building site equipment that plugs into a generator.
- All employers and the self-employed must carry out PAT testing.
- Employers should do PAT testing on all portable appliances in a place of work
- Employers should do PAT testing on appliances that are not in use – the appliances may be used before the next round of PAT testing.
- The workplace environment, and the people that use the appliances, define the interval between testing – where appliance damage is the more likely, testing should be done more often. The testing interval could be 2 years in a benign environment, for instance an office and weekly in a harsh environment where members of the public use the equipment, for instance a North Sea oil rig equipment hiring company. **Seek advice on the PAT testing interval – all situations are different and there are many different opinions.**
- A person who is competent in the safe use of electrical equipment and can understand the PAT test results should do the PAT testing. This usually means that an electrician who is trained in using PAT testing equipment should do the testing.

- The PAT tester AND the employer should keep records of the testing. Keeping records means that both parties can show that they took all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the appliances.
- All appliances that have been tested should have a label stating when the testing was done and by whom. The label should also show the unique identification of the test equipment used and the next test date.
- All landlords, for instance 'buy to let' and owners of houses of multiple occupancy (HMO) should do PAT testing before each new let and at regular intervals after that. 'Regular intervals after that' depends on the tenant – property owners should ask themselves how likely the tenants are to damage appliances – each tenant is different and it is the landlords responsibility to ensure all appliances are safe.
- PAT testing can be done at the same time, and as part of, periodic testing and periodic inspection. Doing PAT testing, periodic testing and inspection are closely related activities – doing them all at once will save time and money.