



Burton-on-Trent Policy for Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) January 2025

1 Statement

Portable appliance testing (PAT) is the term used to describe the examination of electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use.

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 require that any electrical equipment that has the potential to cause injury is maintained in a safe condition. However, the Regulations do not specify what needs to be done, by whom or how frequently (i.e. they do not make inspection or testing of electrical appliances a legal requirement, nor do they make it a legal requirement to undertake this annually). Therefore, the policy devised here is to maintain the safety of our members in their activity groups.

2 Aims of this policy.

This information is to guide our group leaders in the safety and care of small portable electrical appliances and is a condensed version of information taken from the Health and Safety Executive Site found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm> dated 31st January 2025. The aim of this policy is to provide an overview of the key points for group leaders to be aware of, when they are using either small electrical equipment owned by Burton on Trent u3a group or personal equipment in their group settings.

3 The implementation of safety checks on electrical equipment used by group leaders.

This section provides a guide for group leaders about the checks on electrical equipment used in their groups and required by the Burton on Trent u3a policy for PAT testing. It is also possible to PAT test personal equipment purchased by group leaders which are necessary for the conduct of their meetings, on the approval of the lead person prior to the booked PAT test session.

Periodically, electrical equipment used at meetings and owned by u3a is checked for safety and tested. Details of the testing arrangement is distributed *by the lead person for PAT testing*, currently Valerie Bentinck. The Group Leader must ensure that equipment held by them is taken to the assigned venue to testing and collected by them. No equipment should be used that has missed the two-yearly test. Group leaders will be informed of the date and venue of the PAT test a few weeks in advance of the test.

Part 1. Basic checks can be conducted by sight, so with the item disconnected conduct user checks to look for:

1. Leads that are fraying, cuts, heavy scuffing etc.
2. Damage to the plug or bent pins
3. Tape applied to the lead which joins leads together.
4. Coloured wires visible where the lead joins the plug cable.
5. Damage to the outer cover of equipment, including loose parts or screws.
6. Signs of overheating: burn marks, staining or an 'odd' smell in use.
7. Equipment stored in unsuitable conditions such as wet, damp or dusty cupboards or rooms.
8. Cables trapped under furniture or carpets.
9. Consider that the equipment is being used according to manufacturer's instructions, and it is suitable for the job.
10. The plug itself can be opened and checked that all wires are secured in the terminal and the cord grip is holding the cable or lead tightly. No bare wire should be visible.

Part 2.

When deciding whether to test electrical equipment you need to consider type of construction of the equipment in use. Class I is any equipment that is 'earthed' as this has the potential to cause shocks. On the other hand, Class II items are doubly insulated and do not need an earth connection so may not need a PAT. User checks and visual inspections as in Part 1 are advised for Class II items. If in doubt get your item PAT checked. Please see Table 1 in the next section for suggested intervals for checking portable electrical equipment.

4 Basic guidelines for when to undertake user checks and formal PAT testing.

Table 1 Suggested initial intervals for checking portable electrical equipment
source : <https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

Equipment/Environment	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Battery-operated:(less than 40 volts)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage: (less than 50 volts AC): Telephone equipment, low voltage desk-lights	No	No	No
Desktop computers, VDU screens	No	Yes, 2 -4 years	No, if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Photocopiers, fax machines: Not hand-held. Rarely moved.	No	Yes 2-4 years	No, if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Double insulated (Class II) Not hand-held: Moved occasionally, e.g. fans, table lamps	No	Yes 2-4 years	No
Double insulated (Class II) equipment: Hand-held, e.g. some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment	Yes	Yes, 6 months-1 year	No
Earthed equipment (Class I): Electric kettles, some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment and irons	Yes	Yes 6 months-1 year	Yes, 1 – 2 years
Cables (leads and plugs connected to the above) and mains voltage extension leads and battery-charging equipment	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 4 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to	Yes 1-5 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to

Notes for Table 1

Cables, leads and plugs connected to Class II equipment should be maintained as part of that equipment. Cables, leads and plugs not dedicated to an item of equipment should be maintained as individual items as appropriate.

Over time, when you look at the results of user checks, visual inspections and, where appropriate, portable appliance tests, you will notice trends. These may tell you that you need to look at or test electrical equipment less (or more) often, depending on the number of problems being found. Some examples of how to do this are shown on our website (www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm).

If electrical equipment is grouped together for testing at the same time, you should use the shortest testing interval in the group rather than the longest. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to group your electrical equipment by testing interval.

Follow this link for a clear and downloadable guide to ‘maintaining portable electric equipment in low-risk environments:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg236.htm>

V Bentinck 31st January 2025