

## **Electrical Safety And Testing In Village/Community Halls, etc.**

The Electricity at Work Act 1989 states that all electrical systems and equipment used in the working environment should be in a safe condition. The Health & Safety Executive recommend that to comply with the regulations, an inspection and testing programme should be undertaken at all places of work.

The Electricity at Work Regulations place a legal responsibility on employers, employees and self-employed persons to comply with the provisions of the regulations and take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that no danger results from the use of such equipment. This in effect requires the implementation of a systematic and regular programme of maintenance, inspection and testing. The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) places such an obligation in the following, circumstances:

1. Where appliances are used by employees.
2. Where the public may use appliances in establishments such as hospitals, schools, hotels, shops, community halls etc.
3. Where appliances are supplied or hired.
4. Where appliances are repaired or serviced.

The guide below is intended to advise on some of the basic requirements that fall on village hall and community building management committees to enable them to comply with these two pieces of legislation

The guide is by no means exhaustive and the emphasis must be on the word guide. Whilst every effort has been made to establish strict rules of law, the government and various authorities leave many matters open to interpretation and in some areas lay down guidelines only, not hard and fast rules of law.

There are however certain **definite rules**.

**Fixed Installation Testing (FIT)** involves testing the electrical circuits and systems that distribute electricity around a building. It covers all the hard wiring in a building, whether it is commercial, industrial or residential and includes community buildings. All electrical circuits in a building that are fixed, such as lighting socket outlets, air conditioning and other fixed plant need to be tested.

**This must be done by a suitably qualified electrician at intervals of not more than every 5 years**

**Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)** involves the testing of all non fitted and portable electrical equipment used in a building. Such items as televisions, video/DVD equipment, kettles, non hard wired boilers, microwaves etc. Basically any item that requires plugging in to a socket. It also includes any such items brought into a building by users.

**There is no legal requirement for this to be done.**

**HOWEVER** many insurance companies, leases and premises licences may insist on it (check your documents). Also in the case of community buildings, many organisations wishing to hire the use of a building may insist on this as a condition of their doing so.

**PAT if carried out is normally required every 12 months and does not require a qualified electrician, but may be done by a suitably trained person using the approved equipment.**

In both of the above classes of equipment it is **recommended** that regular checks be made by “a competent person” at intervals depending on how frequently the equipment is used and the conditions under which it is used and kept.

With PAT it is **recommended** that this be done on a weekly basis in buildings where the equipment is frequently in use. However in both cases the check largely consists of the competent person visually checking for obvious potential problems such as loose connections, frayed wires etc. and the competent person may be any person, advisedly a committee or staff member, who is qualified to use the appliance.

This advice has been assembled from various sources including the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and Village Hall Information Sheet 15 (Health and Safety Legislation and Village Halls), published by ACRE, both of which are excellent sources of further information on both this and many other health and safety matters.

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