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Diocesan Advisory Committee
for the Care of Churches

PORTABLE APPLIANCE TESTING (PAT) - A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR PARISHES

Introduction

Portable appliance testing (PAT) is the term used to describe the examination of electrical equipment - such as kettles, vacuum cleaners and other items - to make sure they are safe to use. It is not a statutory requirement to have such equipment regularly tested by a qualified electrician and neither is there a formal schedule for how often this has to be done. The regime exists to underpin the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 which require that any electrical equipment that has the potential to cause injury is maintained in a safe condition. There are various ways this can be achieved and some equipment does not need to be considered - for instance, fixed installations covered as part of overall safety checks.

Briefing note

PAT checks on appliances can be carried out by anyone, but it is common sense that a competent person does this when necessary. However, it is the responsibility of every user of portable electrical equipment to treat it with respect and report any suspected defect without waiting for a nominated person to find what may be wrong. Visual inspection can make up the bulk of a test as obvious faults can be found without the need for specialist test equipment. However, carrying out checks to appropriate standards means test equipment will be required, along with the knowledge of how to use it and how to interpret the results. For most parishes, this means engaging an outside specialist to do PAT checks.

There isn't an industry standard qualification for people performing PAT checks, although there is a useful City & Guilds qualification covering this field. It is known as the *Level 3 Certificate for the Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment (2377-12)* which requires 35 hours of study and successful completion of an assessment. There are other electrical qualifications that include good testing practice but for churches, C&G 2377-12 is suitable.

The approach taken to carrying out PAT checks in churches also needs to take account of what is being tested. For instance, a kettle can be tested as a standalone item whereas a complex projection installation, sound amplification system or IT network is clearly more specialist and prone to the disruptive effects of physical and/or electrical abuse from the testing process. Parishes are advised to check the credentials of people being considered for such work to ensure that they have the capability to test sophisticated systems without causing disruption - or if not, that they have the contacts and/or facilities to repair them.

Recommendations and useful further reading

Parishes should adopt a common sense approach to testing portable electrical equipment - much of this can be done visually without involving a specialist. Where a specialist is engaged, they should have a City & Guilds 2377-12 qualification, or an equivalent, and be competent to work on the class of equipment being inspected. They should also be insured.

Health and Safety Executive - key facts about PAT

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

The Institution of Engineering and Technology - best practice industry advice

<http://electrical.theiet.org/books/inspection-test/in-service-inspection-4th-ed.cfm>

City & Guilds - details of the 2377 testing qualification

<http://www.cityandguilds.com/Courses-and-Qualifications/building-services-industry/electrical-installation/2377-electrical-equipment-maintenance-and-testing/level-3>