

## Overview

Schools have a responsibility to safely manage the risks associated with electrical equipment stored and used on the school site. It is a legal requirement that electrical equipment used in schools be inspected and tested on a regular basis by qualified persons to reduce the risk of property damage and injury to staff, students or others.

## Common Electrical items used or stored on the school site

### *Classrooms*

Laptop computers, classroom computers, power charging cables for tablets and smart phones, extension cords, power boards, Christmas lights, whiteboards, overhead projectors, air conditioners.

### *Maintenance Shed*

Power tools, battery chargers.

### *Cleaner's Cupboard*

Vacuum cleaners, floor buffer.

### *Canteens/Food Technology*

Ovens, microwaves, handheld equipment (e.g. hand mixers), food processor.

### *Art Room/Textiles*

Potters wheels, kilns, laminators, sewing machine/overlocker, iron/clothes steamer.

### *Drama/Performance Rooms*

Sound and light equipment.

### *Libraries/Administration/Staffroom*

Air conditioners, vending machines, water coolers, photocopiers, fax machines, desktop computers, coffee machines, fridges, ovens, microwaves, TV/DVD, kettles, toasters.

## Inspection, testing and tagging of electrical equipment

Electrical equipment at the school should be visually inspected by the user before operation for damage, burn marks, loose wires and damaged plugs. The more often electrical items are unplugged, flexed or subject to wear, tear and abuse the more likely they are to be a risk. Any concerns or faults should be reported to the appropriate contact person.



The school should ensure that all new electrical purchases have been checked for any obvious damage, and have been tested and tagged after the first twelve months of purchase.

The testing and tagging of equipment should only be done by a qualified licenced electrician, or by someone who has successfully completed an approved testing and tagging course.

### ***Unauthorised electrical equipment***

Staff do, on occasion, bring electrical equipment in to the school from home. Second hand equipment or items brought from home, such as heaters, should be tested and tagged BEFORE use. If not identified and tested this equipment can pose a risk of electrical shock or fire.

### ***Frequency of Inspections, testing and tagging of equipment***

The school should ensure testing and tagging of items on the following basis:

- 12 monthly basis for the majority of items. This includes laptops, classroom computers, tablets, electrical tools, flexible extension cords, power boards, battery chargers, Christmas lights, jugs, toasters, cooling fans, vacuum cleaners, etc.
- 5 year basis for appliances which are rarely unplugged and not subject to flexing, wear and tear or abuse. This includes photocopiers, faxes, desktop computers located in office areas, cappuccino machines, fridges, stoves, microwaves, TVs, etc.
- Residual Current Devices (RCD) more commonly known as safety switches are to be tested and tagged on a case by case basis as per AS/NZS 3760. The timeframes for RCDs usually vary between 3, 6 and 12 months and 2 years.

### ***Damaged or non-complying equipment***

Damaged or faulty equipment should **ALWAYS** be taken out of service and repaired by a qualified person or replaced. Faulty equipment that cannot be repaired should have the cord cut and be disposed of.

If equipment is to be repaired, it should only be repaired by:

- A licenced electrician
- The equipment manufacturer
- An authorised service agent

Equipment that has been repaired should be tested and tagged BEFORE re-use or return to service.

### ***Records to be kept***

It is the schools responsibility to maintain an updated Electrical Testing and Tagging Register of all the tested and tagged equipment the school has on the school site.



## Strategies to reduce the risks associated with electrical equipment

### ALWAYS

- Test and tag electrical leads, tools and equipment regularly
- Visually inspect electrical leads, tools and equipment for damage before each use
- Use safety switches (also called RCD's) when using electrical tools and equipment
- Use qualified people to repair damaged electrical leads, tools and equipment.

### NEVER

- Use damaged electrical leads, tools and equipment
- Use electrical leads, tools and equipment in damp or wet conditions unless they are specifically designed for those conditions
- Place electrical leads in areas where they may be damaged (e.g. on the ground, through doorways or over sharp edges).

## Resources

- Electrical Equipment Register – Sample Register

## Related Topics

- First Aid
- Incident Reporting

## Legislation

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (section 21)
- Electrical Safety Act 1998