

## The Methodist Property Office - Resourcing Mission

### Electrical Services: inspection and testing

Everyone should be aware that electrical installations need to be checked from time to time to ensure that they are safe. The following comments are intended to help managing trustees understand the position – but, as always, please remember that it is essential that trustees keep abreast of changes and obtain independent professional advice whenever necessary (the architect or surveyor who carries out your quinquennial inspections should be able to advise you further). The legal and technical information should always be consulted for full details.

It is important to remember the distinction between the electrical installation (item 1 below), and portable electrical appliances (item 2), which are covered by different regulations.

From January 2005, electrical work in manses (i.e. domestic property) may be subject to Building Regulations consent – Approved Document P (Electrical Safety).

#### 1. Electrical Installations

The Institute of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations, which have been adopted as a British Standard, require that all fixed installations be tested for safety at least once every 5 years unless they fall into the categories as stated below. Although this is not a mandatory document, it is normally a requirement of insurance policies and Health & Safety risk assessments that the recommendations in this document are complied with. Installations should also be tested and examined after major rewiring or alterations to the installation.

Any qualified electrician e.g. an NICEIC or ECA approved contractor can carry out these tests. They will provide a written report *Periodic Inspection Report for an Electrical Installation* (the certificate number will be prefixed “HP”). The certificate, test results schedule and inspection report, as applicable, should all be kept with the log-book. It will also state when, in their professional opinion, the electrical installation should next be tested and examined.

Type of Installation:	Maximum period between inspections:	
<b>General</b>		
Domestic	10 years	Recommended
Manses ( <i>see also Information leaflet T8A</i> )	5 years	Recommended
<b>Buildings open to the Public</b>		
Churches under 5 years old	1 year	Recommended
Churches over 5 years old	2 years	Recommended
Places of public entertainment	1 year	Recommended
<b>Special Installations</b>		
Emergency Lighting	3 years	Recommended
Fire alarms	1 year	Recommended
Temporary installations	3 months	Recommended

N.B. after testing the above installations the competent person may determine the maximum period between inspections should be less than those stated.

The ‘**routine check**’ should be carried out by someone who is competent to understand the

electrical system, but need not be electrically skilled. The check should look for any wear and deterioration, missing parts, correct labelling, security of enclosures and operation of test buttons etc. Notes about this ‘routine check’ should be included in the log-book.

## 2. Portable Electrical Equipment

The following guidance has been prepared by the Environment Directorate in order to help employers and the self employed comply with the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989:

- **What is Portable Electrical Equipment?**

Generally any piece of electrical equipment which has a plug fitted e.g. kettles, heaters, computers, photocopiers, extension leads.

- **What does the law require me to do?**

The law requires portable electrical equipment to be designed, operated and maintained (including being tested and examined).

- **Do I need to have every piece of electrical equipment electrically tested?**

Not every piece of equipment requires testing, a simple and inexpensive system for looking for visual signs of damage or faults will control most of the electrical risks. However, some appliances (refer to practical guidance) require more thorough testing such as earth bond, continuity, insulation, earth leakage and flash testing may be required.

### What can I do?

The appliance should be switched off before looking for signs of:

- (i) damage, e.g. cuts, abrasion to cable leads.
- (ii) damage to the plug, e.g. casing cracked or the pins are bent.
- (iii) on-standard joints e.g. twisted taped joints or leads badly extended.
- (iv) the outer covering (sheath of cable not being gripped where it enters the plug or the equipment, i.e. where the internal wires are showing)
- (v) damage to the outer cover of the equipment, loose or missing parts.\*Any damaged or suspected faulty equipment should be taken out of service until it has been suitably repaired or replaced.

- **Who can carry out the testing?**

Any qualified electrician e.g. an NICEIC or ECA approved contractor can carry out these tests.

- **How would I be able to demonstrate to the Environment Directorate that I have complied with the law?**

Your copies of test certificates and records would verify this, and may prove crucial in the event of an inspection or litigation.

**Practical guidance:** suggested initial intervals:

Equipment/ environment	User Checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Battery operated: (less than 20 Volts)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage: (less than 50 volts AC) e.g. telephone equipment, low voltage desk lights	No	No	No
Information technology: e.g. 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 equipment: NOT Hand-held. Moved occasionally, e.g. fans, table lamps, slide projectors	No	Yes, 2 - 4 years	No
Double insulated equipment: HAND-HELD e.g. some floor cleaners	Yes	Yes, 6 months to 1 year	No
Earthed equipment(Class 1) : e.g. electric kettles, some floor cleaners	Yes	Yes, 6 months to 1 year	Yes 1 - 2 years
Cables (leads) and plugs connected to the above. Extension leads (mains voltage)	Yes	Yes, 6 months to 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

You should also check any requirements in your insurance policy (Methodist Insurance produce several guidance notes – email [enquiries@micmail.com](mailto:enquiries@micmail.com) tel: 0161 833 9698).