

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) has been subject to Building Regulations consent – Approved Document P (Electrical Safety). The current addition was published in 2010 and revised in 2013 and can be found on line here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441872/BR_PDF_AD_P_2013.pdf

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 below). Although this is not a mandatory document, it is normally a requirement of insurance policies and Health & Safety risk assessments that recommendations in this document are followed. Installations should also be tested and examined after major rewiring or alterations to the installation.

A competent person registered with an electrical self-certification scheme authorised – by the Secretary of State should carry out these tests. The bodies which the Secretary of State currently authorises which register competent electricians for domestic electrical work are:

BSI: www.kitemark.com

ELECSA: www.elecsa.co.uk

NAPIT: www.napit.org.uk

NICEIC: www.niceic.com

They will provide a written report *Periodic Inspection Report for an Electrical Installation*. 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.

The table below provides guidance on the frequency of formal inspections of electrical installations as well as routine checks.

Type of installation	Routine check	Maximum period between inspections and testing as necessary	Reference (see notes below)
Manses	at change of occupancy / yearly	5 years	1
Church installations	1 year	5 years (Quinquennially)	2
Village halls / Community centres	1 year	5 years	1,2
Emergency lighting	Daily / monthly	3 years	2,3,4
Fire alarms	Daily / weekly / monthly	1 year	2,4,5

Reference key

- 1: Particular attention must be taken to comply with the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002/2665).
- 2: S1 1988 N0 635 The Electricity at Work Regulations.
- 3: See BS5266: Part 1: 1988 Code of practice for the emergency lighting.
- 4: Other intervals are recommended for testing operation of batteries and generators.
- 5: See BS 5839 Part 1: 2013 Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings and Code of practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of systems in non-domestic premises

Please note:

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 Health and safety Executive (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg107.htm>) 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 operated and maintained in accordance with manufacturers' instructions. This includes adhering to the guidance on testing and examination. Further information can be found in the following Health and Safety Executive document: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/hsg107.pdf>

- **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) may require more thorough testing such as earth bond, continuity, insulation, earth leakage and flash testing.

- **What can I do?**

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

- (i) damage, e.g. cuts or abrasion to cable leads
 - (ii) damage to the plug (e.g. casing cracks or bent pins)
 - (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 can carry out these tests – e.g. an approved contractor from the electrical self-certification scheme (see (1) above).

• **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 inspections	Combined inspection and testing
Battery operated: (less than 20 Volts)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage: (less than 50 volts AC e.g. telephone, 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, 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, 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, toasters	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	Yes, 1 - 5 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected

You should also check any requirements in your insurance policy, Methodist Insurance produce several guidance notes – tel: 0161 833 9698.