



YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER FOR PORTABLE APPLIANCE TESTING

A guide to PAT Testing for Businesses and Landlords.

What is PAT Testing?

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is a process by which electrical appliances are routinely checked for safety through visual inspections and electrical tests. PAT testing is an essential part of any business or landlord's health and safety obligations, ensuring that electrical appliances are safe to use and reducing the risk of electrical accidents.

Legal Requirements for PAT Testing

In the UK, while there is no specific legal requirement to carry out PAT testing, various regulations require businesses and landlords to ensure the safety of electrical appliances. These include:

- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989: Requires that electrical systems and equipment used at work are maintained in a safe condition.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: Places a duty of care on employers and landlords to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees and tenants.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999: Requires employers to assess risks and take appropriate action to mitigate those risks.

While PAT testing is not explicitly required by law, it is widely recognized as one of the most effective methods to ensure that electrical appliances are safe to use.

Who Needs to Perform PAT Testing?

Businesses: Employers must ensure that any electrical equipment used by their employees, contractors, or the public is safe. This applies to a wide range of settings, including offices, factories, retail outlets, and any other workplace where electrical appliances are in use.

Landlords:

Landlords have a duty to ensure that electrical appliances provided to tenants are safe. This is particularly important in rented properties, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and short-term lets. PAT testing helps landlords comply with their duty of care and avoid potential legal issues.

Which Appliances Need PAT Testing?

PAT testing generally applies to any electrical appliance with a plug that is connected to the electrical mains. This includes:

- Portable appliances: Such as kettles, toasters, and vacuum cleaners.
- Stationary appliances: Such as fridges, washing machines, and printers.
- IT equipment: Such as computers, monitors, and photocopiers.
- Handheld appliances: Such as power tools and hairdryers.
- Cables and chargers: Including extension leads and power supply units

The equipment and the leads are tested separately to ensure that all are in working order. Each test equates for one item being checked. A Computer with a separate lead would count as two items for inspection.

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The PAT Testing Process

Visual Inspection:

- Check for Damage: Look for any visible signs of damage, such as frayed cords, exposed wires, or cracked plugs.
- Correct Fuses: Ensure that the appliance has the correct fuse fitted.
- Plug Condition: Check that the plug is correctly wired and that the casing is intact.
- Cable Condition: Examine the cable for wear and tear, particularly at stress points.

Electrical Testing:

- Earth Continuity Test: Ensures the earth wire is properly connected.
- Insulation Resistance Test: Tests that the insulation around wires is adequate and not allowing current to leak.
- Polarity Check: Confirms that live and neutral wires are correctly connected.
- Functional Check: Ensures the appliance is operating correctly and safely.

Labelling

Once an appliance passes the PAT test, it is usually labeled with a sticker showing the test date and the due date for the next test.

Record Keeping:

Maintain a log of all tested appliances, including test dates, results, and details of any repairs or replacements. This can be crucial evidence of compliance in the event of an incident - Your PAT Testing contractor will issue a log.

How Often Should PAT Testing be Conducted?

The frequency of PAT testing depends on the type of equipment and the environment in which it is used. There are no specific legal requirements dictating how often testing should be carried out, but the following guidelines are commonly used:

Offices, shops, and similar environments:

Handheld appliances: Every 12 months

IT equipment: Every 24 months

Stationary equipment: Every 48 months

Construction sites:

All equipment: Every 3 months

Industrial environments:

Handheld appliances: Every 6 months

Stationary equipment: Every 12 months

Residential properties:

Landlord-supplied appliances: Every 12 months or between tenancies

Who Can Perform PAT Testing?

PAT testing should be carried out by a competent person—someone who has the appropriate training, knowledge, and experience. .

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What Happens if an Appliance Fails?

If an appliance fails a PAT test, it should be immediately removed from use. The options are to:

- Repair: Have the appliance repaired by a qualified electrician and then retested.
- Replace: Dispose of the appliance responsibly and replace it with a new one.
- Re-evaluate: Sometimes, equipment might be reclassified (e.g., moving a faulty device to a lower-risk area).

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Failing to ensure the safety of electrical appliances can lead to serious consequences, including:

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- Legal Penalties: Non-compliance with health and safety regulations can result in fines, legal action, and potential closure of business premises.
- Insurance Issues: Insurance claims can be invalidated if PAT testing has not been carried out and an electrical fault causes damage or injury.
- Reputational Damage: Accidents resulting from electrical faults can severely harm the reputation of a business or landlord.
- Safety Risks: The most serious consequence is the risk to life and property from electrical fires, shocks, or other hazards.
- Best Practices for PAT Testing
- Schedule Regular Testing: Establish a schedule based on the environment and appliance usage.
- Keep Detailed Records: Maintain accurate records of all testing, repairs, and replacements.
- Train Employees: Ensure that employees are aware of the importance of PAT testing and understand the dangers of using faulty equipment.
- Use Qualified Testers: Always ensure that those performing PAT testing are competent and fully trained.

Maintain a log of all tested appliances, including test dates, results, and details of any repairs or replacements. This can be crucial evidence of compliance in the event of an incident.

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