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Testing & Tagging

YOURSAFETY@IRP - ToolBox Discussion

What is Test and Tag?

Regular inspecting and testing of electrical equipment can save lives. It helps identify damage, wear and electrical faults. Test and Tag is the name given to the process of checking the safety of portable electrical appliances. It involves two parts: first visually inspecting the appliance for any damage, followed by electrically testing it with a Portable Appliance Tester (PAT).

Once tested, the item is placed with a tag to confirm that it has in fact been tested, along with showing who tested it, the test date and when the next test is due.

What type of equipment is tested and tagged?

In short, any device that has a flexible cable, a removable plug and is not low voltage (not exceeding 50V). This includes extension leads, cord sets and portable RCD's. It's worth mentioning that new equipment doesn't need to be tested - just visually inspected and tagged.

Who can test and tag electrical equipment?

There is a common misconception that you must be an electrician to test and tag. However, according to AS/NZS 3760:2010, someone who is considered a 'Competent Person' is also able to test and tag in Australia. This is achieved by undertaking a test and tag course, where that person acquires the knowledge and skills in learning to use a PAT tester.

Toolbox Talk Quiz

1. What sort of electrical equipment would you consider as high risk? Why do you think it's high risk?
2. What practises or procedures do you follow before using any electrical equipment?
3. Do RCD's need to be tested in the workplace? If so, how often?

Test and Tag Intervals

When understanding the test and tag intervals and how often an electrical appliance should be tested, the main underlying factor is the type of environment that appliance is located in.

See below for the most common testing frequencies. Below is a guide only, check your sites OHS requirements as some site standards exceed the states minimum requirements:

- **3 months:** building, construction and demolition
- **6 months:** factories, warehouses and production
- **12 months:** an environment where the equipment/supply cord is less likely to be prone to flexing or open to abuse (like office equipment- computers monitors etc.)
- **5 yearly:** an environment where the equipment/supply cord is NOT prone to flexing or open to abuse

Many workplaces will have different test and tag frequencies because of their own risk management and OHS planning. Likewise, some of these industries might require you to use certain test and tag colours.

Just as important, the AS/NZS 3760 standard (table below) should be seen as a minimum requirement.

Types of environment and/or equipment (a)	Interval between inspection and tests				
	Equipment including Class I and Class II equipment, cord sets, cord extension sets and EPOD's (b)	Residual current devices (RCD's)			
		Push button test - by user		Operating time and push button test	
		Portable (c)	Fixed (c)	Portable (e)	Fixed (f)
1. Factories, workshops, places of work or repair, manufacturing, assembly, maintenance or fabrication.	6 months	Daily, or before every use, whichever is the longer	6 months	12 months	12 months
2. Environment where the equipment or supply flexible cord is subjecting to flexing in normal use OR is open to abuse OR is in a hostile environment	12 months	3 months	6 months	12 months	12 months
3. Environment where the equipment or supply cord is NOT subject to flexing in normal use and is NOT open to abuse and is NOT in a hostile environment	5 years	3 months	6 months	2 years	2 years
4. Residential type areas: hotels, residential institutions, motels, boarding houses, halls, hostels accommodation houses, and the like	2 years	6 months	6 months	2 years	2 years
5. Equipment used for commercial cleaning	6 months	Daily, or before every use, whichever is the longer	N/A	6 months	N/A
6. Hire equipment: Inspection	Prior to hire	Including push-button test by hirer prior to hire		N/A	N/A
Test and Tag	3 months	N/A		3 months	12 months
7. Repaired, serviced and second-hand equipment	After repair or service which could affect electrical safety, or on reintroduction to service, refer to AS/NZS 5762				

More information about Test and Tagging can be found at 'Electricity Frequently Asked Questions' and for more comprehensive information, 'Guide to testing and tagging portable electrical equipment and residual current devices at workplaces'