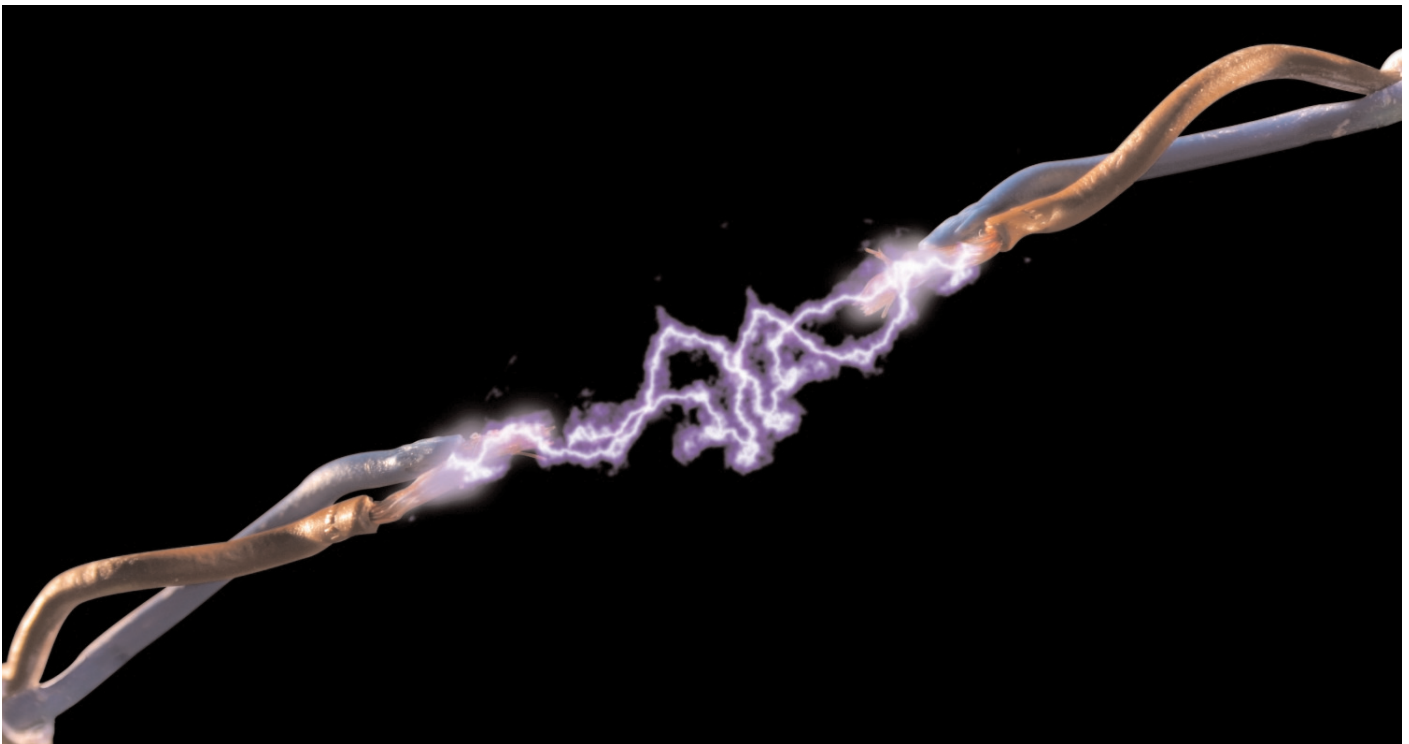


Electrical Equipment Safety - **The Shocking Truth**

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We are all faced with complying with **Occupational Health & Safety Regulations and Electrical Equipment Safety can be seen as either a burden or a benefit.**

How do you look at it? Is it a burden because of the cost and effort involved to arrange the necessary regular testing and to keep the recording up to date? Or is it a benefit because it means you must maintain a safe environment for your accommodation guests as well as the staff that service that environment?

The obligations for electrical safety are no different to any other requirement for Occupational Health & Safety. Fire regulations are a good example, and so electrical safety is just another class of investment that helps to prevent problems arising and therefore protects the reputation of your operation, your insurance position, your profits, and most importantly, the safety of your guests and staff.

Hotels & Motels

In 2002 South Australian Workplace Services Inspectors conducted an audit throughout the state of the Hotel Industry. This resulted in 71 hotels being selected.

The first key health and safety issue identified during the audit was:

Electrical Safety – Significant non-compliance, in particular, failure to test and tag electrical equipment and the failure to protect electrical equipment with an RCD (electrical safety switch)

There were 25 Improvement Notices and 45 Verbal directions issued throughout this audit.

To achieve compliance Employers were recommended to ensure all electrical equipment in the workplace be tested and tagged and that all electrical appliances be protected by an RCD. >

Other News:

The ACT WorkCover announced that they will be targeting Electrical Safety following a spate of injury reports involving electrical shocks. In the last six months they investigated a number of incidents including a teacher's aid receiving an electrical shock from a **school laptop computer**.

Not only is there a risk of electrocution, there is a risk of faulty equipment causing fires.

What are the rules?

OH&S ACTS & REGULATIONS

Under the respective Occupational Health and Safety Acts there is a duty for an employer to provide a safe workplace. To meet this obligation it is necessary to ensure that the risk of injury from electrical shock for all staff and/or **visitors** is reduced as far as is reasonably practicable.

The minimum requirements for the safety of electrical equipment can be found in the combined Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS3760 and/or OH&S Regulations.

AS/NZS 3760:2003 outlines the "in-service safety inspection and testing of electrical equipment".

Electrical Equipment Safety Testing also known as "Testing & Tagging" provides evidence to an inspector that electrical equipment is being maintained and is in a safe condition.

Any equipment found to be unsafe should be withdrawn immediately from service to ensure that it is not used.

How can I manage my operation?

There are 5 steps in the safety inspection and testing process, they are:

- Visual Inspection and Risk Assessment
- Electrical Testing
- Tagging
- Recording – logbook or electronic format
- Notification of the next re-test date and keeping records up to date

Outsourcing:

Electrical companies and Specialised Testing and Tagging companies generally charge from \$3.00 to \$6.00 per item tested and in some cases a call out fee is also payable. On completion they should provide you with a set of records showing the status of all equipment tested. The level of service received varies between providers and can be quite a time consuming process to decide who to use.

DIY:

Do It Yourself (doing it in-house). Attending a one day training course and purchasing/hiring a Portable Appliance Tester (PAT) is a short term investment that will reduce the costs associated with electrical safety testing over the long term. Doing It Yourself will also allow you to test the one or two items when outsourcing will prove cost prohibitive.

No matter which method you choose keeping records up to date is crucial. Without proper records how will you know when an item is due to be re-tested or whether it is no longer being used?

TYPES OF EQUIPMENT AND FREQUENCY OF TESTING

AS/NZS3760 describes the types of equipment requiring testing and provides the minimum retesting frequency. It also outlines the testing requirements of Residual Current Devices (RCDs).

WHO CAN CARRY OUT SAFETY TESTING?

A licenced electrician or a competent person may perform electrical safety testing. A competent person, is deemed capable of correctly performing the task based on their knowledge, skill, level of training, experience or a combination of these. E.g. A person that has completed a course in Electrical Safety Inspection & Testing from a TAFE or Registered Training Organization.

Such a course is also very beneficial if you are in a management role. By having an understanding of what is required will better enable you to make informed decisions.

SUGGESTED STEPS - CHECKLIST

1. Have a clear understanding of the requirements and a written policy relating to electrical safety within your facility.
2. Employee Induction – electrical safety as part of the OHS Induction process.
3. Safety Inspection and Testing of **ALL** Electrical Equipment
4. RCD (Residual Current Device or Earth Leakage Circuit Breaker, Safety Switch) – Mechanical and Electrical Testing
5. Good Record Keeping – Written or Electronic allowing for detail history of testing and prompting of retesting.

Remember, electricity has great potential to seriously injure or kill. We all have a responsibility to ensure our electrical equipment is safe, regularly inspected and maintained. ■

For more information contact Andrew Campbell from Intertag Pty Ltd on (02) 9853 3259 or visit the website www.intertag.com.au