

Pat ON THE BACK

In order to ensure the health and safety of practice staff, electrical equipment needs regular checks. **Matthew Jane** finds out more about PAT testing

It is a legal requirement for employers to ensure equipment in the workplace is safe to use. Portable appliance testing (PAT) should be carried out to ensure equipment is not dangerous.

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 states: "As may be necessary to prevent danger, all systems shall be maintained so as to prevent, so far as reasonably practicable, such danger."

Under the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) code of practice, the frequency for carrying out a PAT test varies according to the equipment (see box out). It is important that tests are carried out by a competent person who is confident in their ability to ensure their safety and the safety of others. While there is no formal requirement for qualifications for carrying out PAT tests, there is a City and Guilds qualification 2377 for inspection and testing of electrical equipment.

The IEE states: "What should be considered 'danger' prevented, just the is that the to be includes not dangers should be checked:

which may arise during the testing procedure to the tester and others, but also the dangers which may arise at a later date as a result of using equipment which has not been effectively tested."

All portable equipment which has a plug attached to it will need to be tested. PAT testing companies are available to carry out the tests, and will usually charge per item.

When equipment has been tested, PAT stickers are used to record the individual results. If any equipment fails the test, a sticker should be put on it to state this. These labels should feature:

- unique identification code (making equipment identifiable)
- the result of the Pat Test (pass or fail)
- the date the portable appliance was tested
- a re-test period or the re-test date.

Formal visual inspections can also be carried out to ensure the equipment is installed and is being operated in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. The following are examples of items which should be checked:

- cables near doors located so as to avoid damage
- means of disconnection/isolation readily accessible
- adequate equipment ventilation
- cups, plants and work material correctly placed to avoid spillage
- equipment positioned to avoid strain on cord
- equipment is being operated with the covers in place and any doors are closed
- indiscriminate use of multi-way adaptors and trailing sockets is avoided.

Ensuring equipment is safe to use is a legal requirement for surgeries and keeping your electrical items in safe working order is essential to avoid any nasty shocks. ♦

ITEM	FREQUENCY
Stationary equipment	48 months
IT equipment	48 months
Movable equipment	24 months
Portable equipment	24 months
Hand-held equipment	12 months

Source: Williams Medical Supplies

