

# PAT Testing: DIY v Contractor

PAT Testing: DIY v Contractor Dale<sup>[1]</sup> 2016-02-09T10:03:35+00:00

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## **Do you need to PAT Test?**

If you employ one person or more, have the public attending your premises, or you carry out work on other peoples premises using portable electrical appliances, you will need to PAT Test. The law is clear that electrical appliances need regular inspection to ensure that employees and the public are safe. The IEC recommend that you not only carry out a visual inspection of appliance, but that they are also PAT Tested using an electrical measuring device (PAT Testing machine) to ensure that the internal components of an appliance are working within safe limits.

## **How often do my electrical appliances need inspecting?**

Frequency of inspection is determined by several factors including the following:

- What the appliance is or does
- How often it's used
- Is it used with water?

- Is it plugged or unplugged frequently?
- Is the appliance well cared for? Used by lots of people and moved frequently?
- Are you using appliances on a construction site, or in other third party premises?

The answer is, you need to determine a reasonable frequency for testing based on many factors. In reality many desktop computers, stored securely and never or rarely used probably only need testing every two years. Whereas kettles, vacuum cleaners, extension leads, drills etc. may need testing as frequently as every 6 months. If you are using equipment on someone else's premises, they are likely to ask for proof that inspections are completed. By law portable electrical appliances on construction sites need checking every 3 months. The frequency of testing is not once size fits all.

### **Do I need someone who is qualified to do the PAT Testing?**

You do not need a qualified electrician to carry out your PAT Testing, you do however need a competent person who understands how to carry out a full visual inspection and PAT Test. It isn't difficult to do. With the correct instruction or training, and using a simple machine, you can easily do it yourself. This is why we sell PAT Testing machines, we have an easy to use machine, and an instructional DVD that covers all you need to know.

### **Wouldn't it be easier to get someone in to PAT Test?**

It might make sense to have a contractor come in and do your PAT Testing. However, you will still be responsible for what they do, and are ultimately held accountable so you need to keep in mind the following when making a decision:

- You still need to know all about PAT Testing! The HSE will hold you, not the PAT Testing Company responsible. While there are excellent & reputable PAT Testers out there, there are also the 'Sticker Brigade' who offer PAT Testing at ridiculously low prices and do not do the full job. Even experienced PAT Testers will only be able to test approximately 80 – 150 maximum appliances per day. If the PAT Tester claims he can do more, he probably isn't doing the job properly.
- You will need to ensure that they have full access to the equipment being tested as they will not want to keep returning to your premises as and when appliances are free, which may cause disruption. The server will need to be checked, which will mean everyone stopping work!
- You may have vulnerable residents, employees, children or members of the public on your premises meaning the PAT Tester will need to be accompanied at all times.
- You need to check their equipment has a valid calibration certificate. All PAT Testing machines need to be calibrated annually.
- If you have any sensitive or specialised electrical equipment, can you be sure that they won't damage it? Are you certain they will not cause problems with servers and electrical telephone systems that might be essential to your business?

- How much will they charge to come out if you or an employee brings in appliances from home or other establishments where they haven't already been tested?
- Are they able to come to your premises at weekends or in the evening so that it doesn't stop your staff from getting on with their work?
- The Contractor should provide you with detailed records which give each appliance a reference, advising whether it passed or failed the test (and why) and detailing when the next test is due by. It will also note where the appliances are used/stored etc. You need to understand these records fully, and ensure that you update the contractor when there are any changes or amendments. Remember the frequency of testing is dictated by the appliance risk, user risk and location risk.

### **How much will it cost if I do it myself?**

Well it will cost £255 +vat for everything you need to do your own PAT Testing, including an instructional DVD. Thereafter it will cost £43 +vat a year to have the machine calibrated. That is £5 a week in the first year and less than a penny a week for the following years. In addition:

- The overall cost to your business should be reduced as you will be able to schedule the testing for times that suit your business should be reduced, as you will be able to schedule the testing for times that suit your business, reducing downtime.
- You can use your own staff
- You only need to test appliances as and when they need it.
- You can loan out or share a machine with a neighbouring business, or across multiple sites.
- You are in full control of the PAT Testing and how it is done.
- We still regularly service and calibrate machines that are more than 15 years old! So they won't need to be replaced regularly.
- Your experienced staff will handle any specialised equipment appropriately.
- No employees, children elderly residents, patients or customers need to encounter unfamiliar people wandering around your premises.
- You get to know your appliances, and are able to monitor their condition so that you can plan to replace them in an appropriate timeframe.
- Generally, we find that most businesses could benefit from doing their own PAT Testing, but not all. If you think a contract PAT Tester is the way to go for your business, make sure you follow the advice above. Otherwise, it is time to take control and start doing your own PAT Testing. You will be amazed at how quickly you are up and running with our easy PAT Testing kit, which is supplied with a full instructional DVD as well as everything you need to start doing your own PAT Testing.

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#### Links

1. <http://www.parker-bell.co.uk/news/author/jo/>

2. <http://www.parker-bell.co.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/DIY-v-Contractor.jpg>
3. <http://www.parker-bell.co.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/DIY-v-Contractor.jpg>