

1 *The PLATO entry is comprehensive and it deals with, electrical safety, electrical installations, routine checks, inspections and tests, portable electrical equipment and organs. They also deal with Gas Safety, therefore please read these guidelines in conjunction with the Synod policy below and other relevant material.*

Electrical and Gas Safety (SYN)

2 Electricity can kill. Each year there are hundreds accidents involving electric shock or burns and some are fatal. Even non-fatal shocks can cause severe and permanent injury. Many accidents can be avoided by careful planning and straightforward precautions.

3 The main hazards are:

- contact with live parts causing shock and burns (normal mains voltage, 230 volts AC, can kill;
- faults which could cause fires;
- fire or explosion where electricity could be the source of ignition in a potentially flammable or explosive atmosphere.

Assessing the risk

4 Hazard means anything which can cause harm. Risk is the chance, great or small that someone will actually be harmed by the hazard. The first stage in controlling the risk is to carry out a risk assessment in order to identify what needs to be done.

Therefore:

- identify the risk;
- decide who might be harmed, and how;
- evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether the precautions in place are adequate or more should be done;
- review the assessment from time to time.

Reducing the Risk

5 Once you have completed the risk assessment you can use your findings to reduce unacceptable risks from electrical and gas equipment. There are many things you can do to achieve this:

- ensure that all electrical installations are safe;
- provide safe and suitable equipment for use;
- reduce the voltage;
- provide safety devices;
- carry out preventative maintenance;
- work safely.

6 The Institute of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations, which have been adopted as a British Standard, require that all fixed installations be tested for safety at least once every five years, unless the fall into the categories as stated below.

R – Recommended	M- Mandatory	'R' or 'M'
Type of installation	Maximum period	
Building installation	between inspections	

Buildings open to the Public

Churches under 5 years old	1 year	R
Churches over 5 years old	2 years	R
Places of public entertainment	1 year	R

Portable Electrical equipment – is defined as any piece of electrical which has a plug fitted, kettles, heaters, computers, photocopiers and extensions leads.

Desktop computers, VDU screens, Photocopiers and Fax machines require formal visual inspection required between 2 and 4 years. If not double insulated then combined inspection and testing every 5 years.

Double insulated equipment NOT hand held – and only moved occasionally, fans, table lamps and slide projectors require a formal visual inspection only between 2 and 4 years.

Hand-held equipment and double insulated – e.g. some floor cleaners require a user check and a formal visual inspection between 6 months to 1 year.

Earthed equipment (Class 1) e.g. electric kettles and some floor cleaners require a user check, a formal visual inspection between 6 months and 1 year and a combined inspection and testing between 1 and 2 years.

Cables (leads) and plugs connected to the above require user checks, formal visual inspections between 6 months and four years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to, and a combined inspection and testing between 1 year and 5 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to.

7 **The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 1996**

All premises – any place of work that has a gas installation and/or gas appliances installed must be maintained in such way so as to prevent risk of injury to any person. **Gas installations MUST be checked annually.** The definition of what is an appropriate maintenance programme will be determined by the installations age, condition and usage. If an inspector is of the opinion the installation is not being properly maintained and may give rise to danger, enforcement action may be taken.

8 **Gas Safety**

The installation of all gas pipe work and appliances in all church premises should only be undertaken by a Registered Gas Installer. Any gas appliances in use on the premises (including heating systems) should be checked for safety at least annually. The person carrying out the check needs to be competent and this is assured by using someone who is in membership of CORGI (The Council of Registered Gas Installers). It is a legal requirement that anyone carrying out work on gas appliances is CORGI registered.

Accurate and up to date records of all gas appliance maintenance and inspections, including gas maintenance contracts, should be maintained by each church and made available as appropriate.

9 **Electrical Safety**

All electrical work (such as installation work, testing and remedial work) should be undertaken only by an approved contractor registered with the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) and particularly, the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC).

Work must accord with BS 7671:1992 (including any Amendments subsequently issued) and completion and test certificates should also be provided in accordance with this standard.

Periodic Inspection and Testing should be undertaken at least every 5 years by an approved electrical contractor with resulting remedial works being undertaken without delay. Any unsafe and dangerous electrical installations should be electrically isolated immediately and not re-connected until they are made safe.

Fire alarm installations and emergency lighting installations should similarly be installed and regularly tested by approved contractors with quarterly and 6 monthly inspections by a competent person in addition to Periodic Inspection and Tests on a 5 and 3 yearly basis respectively. (This is in accordance with BS5839:1992 and BS5266 Part 1)

All electric appliances fitted with a plug (including those loaned, borrowed, hired etc.), in all church premises should be subjected to an inspection and test (Portable Appliance Testing) in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, the Electricity at Work Regulations and the EC Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

This work should be undertaken at least annually and only by a competent person who is suitably qualified and equipped to undertake such inspection and testing. All satisfactorily tested appliance leads should be fitted with a referenced and dated label by the tester making reference to a schedule of church equipment requiring such inspection and testing.

All records of electrical testing and certificates should be retained by the church on the premises to which they relate and made available as appropriate.

10 **Organs**

The hazards associated with a pipe organ are not always fully appreciated and so some guidelines are appropriate.

Lights provided for illuminating the music desk or to facilitate internal inspection of the instrument should only be installed by a qualified electrician using permanent wiring. If a portable electric heater is required for the organist or to maintain the temperature of the organ in cold weather, this should be of the convector or fan- assisted type fitted with a cut-out that operates in the event of overheating.

The electric action of the organ should be maintained and modified only by a professional organ builder. The blower is a common source of fire and it should therefore be examined by a competent electrical engineer at least once every five years and preferable annually. It is vital that the blower is switched off whenever the organ is not in use.

11 **Electricity at Work regulations 1989**

Where one or more persons are employed by the church under a Contract of Employment (e.g. a caretaker), these regulations apply and are quite onerous. Any work undertaken by an employee must be carried out in such a manner that no hazard is created as a result. Churches should also ensure that contractors or qualified "members" giving their labour free are aware of the requirements of the regulations. Before commencing work, they should confirm in writing that they have employer's liability and public liability insurance cover and a thorough knowledge of the regulations and of the Health and Safety at Work Act.