



UKRI Health and Safety Briefing – Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) & Hybrid Working

Introduction

This briefing provides the key information surrounding Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) in a Hybrid working model. Any electrical equipment purchased or supplied by UKRI for work purposes is subject to PAT requirements, the details of what is to be tested, how often and why are discussed here.

This information will be applicable to everyone working in a Hybrid model and using electrical equipment issued by UKRI.

Portable Equipment

Electrical equipment issued for Hybrid working is likely to fall within the definition of Portable Equipment, i.e. laptops and screens with a plug and socket arrangement.

The Law

All electrical equipment supplied for work purposes must be maintained in a safe condition to meet the requirements of the *Electricity at Work Regulations (1989)*, however, the law does not specify how this should be done, how often and by whom. The level of maintenance is purely down to risk and the type of equipment being used.

PAT Testing, therefore, provides a method to identify risk and levels of maintenance and inspection of equipment; compliance with PAT Testing guidelines satisfies the requirements of the *Electricity at Work Regulations (1989)*.

UKRI and you have a joint responsibility to maintain any equipment issued to you for Hybrid working purposes.

The Risks

The primary risks of portable electrical devices are electric shock and fire; PAT testing and regular visual inspection by the user can help reduce this risk significantly.

Electrical equipment Issued for Hybrid Working

Electrical equipment issued by UKRI for use in a Hybrid working environment would include:

- Laptops, including the power supply units and cables.
- Display screens including power supply cables
- Mobile phone and tablet chargers, including the part that plugs into a socket only.
- Docking Stations, including power supply units and cables.

Other equipment may also be supplied for use, though it should be noted that this guidance does not apply to USB or battery operated equipment.

You would not be issued a 4-way extension socket for use at home by UKRI, though it is worth remembering that 4-way extension sockets used in the Office workspace are subject to PAT testing.



Types of equipment and PAT testing

The type of construction of electrical equipment is a significant factor on deciding its risk to the user, and therefore relates to the frequency of testing and inspection. They fall into three categories.



Class I Equipment

This is equipment that, for safety reasons, has an Earth connection. If there is a fault within the equipment there is a possibility that the outside of the equipment could cause an electric shock if the earth connection is not there.

This type of equipment must be fully tested and inspected.



Class II Equipment

Class II equipment is sometimes referred to as 'double insulated' equipment. This means that there is extra insulation within the construction of the equipment to prevent accidental contact with live parts, even if there is a fault. Class II equipment does not need an earth connection.

This type of equipment requires PAT Testing, specifically an Insulation test. It is also critical that the casing and cables are free from damage.



Class III Equipment

Class III appliances are low-voltage and are the safest class of electrical device due to their design using an isolating transformer. Class III devices do not need an Earth connection.

This type of device does not need to be PAT tested, though if there is a separate power cable this will need to be tested.





What Class Does Equipment Issued to me by UKRI for Hybrid Working Fall Under?

I.T equipment issued for Hybrid working (laptops, screens, docking stations etc.) is predominantly Class III – the safest of all the classes.

How Often Does the Equipment Issued to Me Require PAT Testing?

Guidelines state every 12 months for portable I.T equipment.

What Do I Need to Do?

You need to ensure that you visually inspect I.T equipment assigned to you at least annually, though you may wish to consider inspecting it more if the equipment is subject to a lot of wear and tear from travelling and being in bags and cases.

Look for damage in the casing and for splits and tears in the cable outer insulation that may lead to exposure of live parts.

If any equipment issued to you is found to be damaged or is defective, contact the issuer immediately for a replacement.

It is also sensible to inspect your own 4-way extension cables that you may be using, though as stated earlier, it is unlikely that these will have been issued to you by UKRI and are, therefore, **your own responsibility**.

How Can I ensure that Any Equipment Issued to me gets PAT Tested?

If the equipment issued is new, then a visual check as described will suffice.

If you have older equipment that you think needs a PAT test, then contact your local Facilities and/or Health and Safety contact.

Further Reading

HSE Guidance - indg236: Maintaining Portable Electric Equipment in Low Risk Environments.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

UKRI Office Estates Health and Safety Risk Guidance Documents

UKRI HS Code 10 Electrical Safety Portable Appliances

