



## **Risk control**

### **WFH Series: Electrical Safety**



In partnership with



# WFH Series: Electrical Safety

## Introduction

It may be argued that companies offering a hybrid or fully remote working employment option may maintain a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent in comparison with those organisations who maintain a traditional office-based operating model.

## Electrical Risks

Although most households will usually maintain access to a wide array of electrical items, from toasters and kettles to TV's and radios, certain practices may unknowingly increase the risk of an electrical fault in connection with the use of electrical equipment in the home.

Practices that may increase the risks include:

- Overloading extension leads, adaptors, or plug sockets while powering multiple electronic devices
- Daisy-chaining involves the unsafe practice of plugging one extension cable into another to reach further or facilitate more equipment

## Risk Assessment

It is a legal requirement for employers to provide suitable and sufficient equipment to their employees for the role being undertaken, and to ensure that the maintenance of the equipment is to the required standard. However, it is not a requirement for employers to ensure that the electrical infrastructure of the employee's home is in good working order. Neither is it a requirement for employers to maintain items such as adaptors and extension cables unless they were provided by the employer to the employee for work-related purposes.

The employer must make sure a risk assessment of employees work activities and work equipment has been undertaken and regularly reviewed.

## Controls

Employers must ensure that the electrical equipment is<sup>1</sup>:

- **Suitable for use**, and for the purpose and conditions in which it is to be used
- **Maintained** in a safe condition for use so that people's health and safety is not at risk
- **Inspected** to ensure that it is safe for use. Any inspection should be carried out by a competent person (this could be an employee if they have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience) and a record kept

Furthermore:

- Employers should provide adequate information, instruction and training about the specific equipment stating what the hazards are when using the equipment
- A risk assessment should be conducted in collaboration with the affected employee(s)
- Training for the employees on the risk assessment and the visual checking of their equipment should be provided
- Home working policies should highlight processes for the reporting of defective electrical equipment
- Contrary to popular belief, PAT testing is not a legal requirement, however, it is an effective way of identifying faults and maintenance requirements for portable electrical appliances. If offices routinely undertake programmes of PAT testing, then a prudent course of action may be to include equipment allocated to remote workers within these programmes.

Although the employer is responsible for the maintenance of the equipment, they are not responsible for electrical sockets and other parts of a domestic electrical system, which remain the employee's responsibility.

Employee's home insurance may be affected by working from home for prolonged periods, and so those employees should check with their home insurance provider.

It is also recommended that remote workers are advised to carry out visual safety inspections on a regular basis to ensure:

- Plugs, cables and casings are not damaged
- There are no burn marks or odours that suggest overheating
- There are no trailing wires (trip hazards)
- Plug sockets are not overloaded
- Cables are not routed under carpets or rugs
- Extension cables are used only when absolutely necessary, and are not daisy chained

Employers should ensure that electrical faults associated with work-related equipment are reported without delay, even on suspicion alone, and that the implicated equipment is removed from use immediately and until such times as it can be inspected, repaired, or replaced.

## Summary

Employers maintain legal duties to protect their employees.

These duties extend to those employees working remotely.

Employers need to adapt their approaches to the management of their employees' health and safety to ensure risks are not increased through homeworking arrangements.

Employees may be out of sight, but they must never be out of an employer's mind.

## References

- 1 Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22 (Third edition) HSE Books 2008 ISBN 978 0 7176 6295 1 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm)

## Additional Legislation

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Guidance available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsr25.pdf>

## Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

## Get in touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.



### **Risk Management Partners**

The Walbrook Building  
25 Walbrook  
London EC4N 8AW

020 7204 1800  
[rmpartners.co.uk](http://rmpartners.co.uk)

This newsletter does not purport to be comprehensive or to give legal advice. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, Risk Management Partners cannot be held liable for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies contained within the document. Readers should not act upon (or refrain from acting upon) information in this document without first taking further specialist or professional advice.

Risk Management Partners Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered office: The Walbrook Building, 25 Walbrook, London EC4N 8AW. Registered in England and Wales. Company no. 2989025.