Electrical safety

This bulletin gives advice on how to use extension leads and electrical appliances safely. There was an incident on campus where an employee unplugged a heater from an extension lead under their desk without turning it off first. The surge of current caused a bang and a flash, startling the employee who hit their head on the desk. The incident blew the plug fuse and tripped the miniature circuit breaker resulting in offices being without electricity for a period of time.

Extension leads

- The best solution is to avoid the need to use extension leads by providing an adequate number of permanent wall sockets and in suitable locations. If there is a heavy reliance on extension leads investigate the provision of additional wall plug sockets with your line manager.
- Place extension leads and the plug where you can easily access them.
- Plug appliances that generate heat direct into the wall and not into an extension lead, for example kettles, coffee machines, microwaves and heaters should always be plugged into a wall socket.
- An extension lead must be plugged into a wall socket. Avoid ‘daisy chaining’ where extension leads are plugged into one another or multiway adaptors.
- The extension lead should be fully supported. Do not allow extension leads to dangle on the leads of plugged in appliances.
- Fully unwind cable reel and cable drum extension leads when in use.
- Do not overload your extension leads. Use this [socket overload calculator](#) to find out if you are.
- Extension leads should have a current portable appliance testing (PAT) sticker on them.
- The extension lead PAT testing frequency should be the same as the appliances that plug into it. For example, an extension lead on a 3 yearly PAT cycle is acceptable provided the equipment being plugged into it is also of a type that required PAT on the 3 yearly cycle, such as computers.

Electrical appliances

- Turn off appliances before you unplug them.
- Do not use damaged equipment. You can identify the majority of potentially dangerous electrical equipment through [simple visual checks](#).
- Check the appliance has a current PAT sticker on it. If it has a fail tag on it turn the appliance off immediately. Remove it from use and dispose of it safely through the University’s [waste electrical equipment arrangements](#). If it is an extension lead, turn off the appliances plugged into it and the extension lead and unplug them.

Further information

For more information, visit [Electrical safety](#) and [Portable Appliance Testing](#) on the University’s health and safety website. For advice on socket provision or arranging PAT contact the Estate Management Helpdesk or your Facilities Management provider.