

Safety Alert



Ref No: SA-011-2024

19 September 2024

Portable Appliance Electrical Safety

What happened:

A high potential incident occurred at a member's premises when the plug of a portable heater caught fire. This incident highlights the dangers of untested or unsafe portable equipment being used on site.

Key findings:

- It was found that employees used portable heaters to bring individual rooms up to temperature.
- As portable equipment is moved around, it can often be missed on portable appliance testing regimes.
- Full pre-use checks of portable appliances are rarely carried out by users.

Considerations for members:

Members may wish to consider the following actions:

- Review the risks associated with the use of portable electric heaters and decide whether their use is appropriate across all areas of your site.
- Ensure regular inspection regimes are in place with relevant registers.
- Ensure that competent personnel are available to test portable appliances at regular intervals.
- Ensure the use of personal electrical items is adequately controlled.
- Actively promote pre-use checks; including cable and plug checks and checking for evidence of PAT tests. Unsafe equipment should be quarantined.
- Provide safety information warning against overloading power sockets and promoting safe use of extension leads.

PSS would like to thank Forth Ports for sharing the details of this incident and the related learnings at the base of this alert.

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The Facts

A recent high potential incident was reported when a portable heater (plug) caught fire. This has highlighted the dangers of untested or unsafe portable equipment being present within areas of the business.

Outline of the problem

Often there are meeting rooms and offices that are left unoccupied for extended periods. Inactive offices are known to lead to employees using portable heaters being used as an easy solution to allow for individual rooms to be brought to temperature.

Due to the nature of moving portable equipment around they can often miss out on any portable appliance testing regime.

Full pre use checks of portable appliances often rarely takes place by users.

Overview of policy to be followed by Forth Ports locations:

1. Ensure that you have a portable appliance register in place.
2. Ensure that you have competent personnel available to test portable appliances.
3. Ensure the addition of personal electrical items are adequately controlled (Corrective Action in this case).
4. Actively promote the best practices of pre use checking of all portable appliances at relevant opportunities.
5. Actively promote pre-use checks of all portable appliances during VFL activities.

The Solution

Always follow Forth Ports' Procedure for Testing of Portable Electrical Equipment, details of which can be found by clicking the linked tile below which will take you to specific Health & Safety documentation (Note: this tile is on H&S Intranet Homepage).



***Please use Scottish Documentation for guidance**

Advisory Forth Ports Actions:

Review departmental/port facilities to:

1. Ensure your department has relevant up to date risk assessment in place for portable appliance use.
2. Ensure an inspection regime with relevant register(s) are in place.
3. Ensure competent personnel are assigned to carry out appliance testing at the correct intervals.
4. Ensure adequate labelling of portable appliances is in effect.
5. Actively advertise the policies applicable to bringing personal portable appliances into the workplace.
6. Promote "best practice pre use checks", such as:
 - a) Locating and checking PAT Testing labelling.
 - b) Cable and Plug checks (what to look for).
 - c) Info on loading of appliances into power sockets (via extension leads).

Awareness of the danger posed by unsafe portable electrical items is critical for incident prevention, this is particularly relevant at this time of year when we all like to have electrical Christmas decorations in our workplace. If any equipment is found to be unsuitable, you must STOP its use immediately (isolation by unplugging it) and inform your Supervisor.

SAFETY F1RST: Let's make injury unacceptable in the workplace

Issued on behalf of Forth Ports Limited by:
Health, Safety & Environment Department

Minimum briefing to be ticked:

Management		Supervisors	
Operations		Engineering	
Admin		Marine	
All Employees	✓	Noticeboards	✓

* Please remove from notice board after 1 month

SAFETY F1RST

