

# Dawlish Town Council

## Electrical safety

### 1. Statement of Policy

Electricity at mains voltages and above can pose a serious risk to life and overloaded or poorly maintained systems can overheat and cause fires. Electricity is, however, used in very many of the buildings owned by the Council and in the homes of most employees. Familiarity breeds contempt and there is a tendency to take electrical safety for granted. There are steps that should be taken to ensure safety and these steps are given in this policy.

There is specific legislation relating to electricity in the form of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Whilst these Regulations do not impose a specific duty for risk assessment, electricity is a hazard that should be included in the general risk assessment required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 99.

The Electricity at Work Regulations impose a range of duties on employers. Employers must ensure that electrical equipment is properly constructed, installed, maintained and used and that it is suitable for the environment in which it is used. Regulation 14 prohibits work on live electrical systems unless it is unreasonable for the power to be disconnected.

It is worth noting that there is no explicit requirement to have electrical equipment inspected for safety. Inspection is important, however, and is implied in the requirement for maintenance.

The Council acknowledges the importance of protecting employees and others from the risks associated with electricity. Compliance with this policy may help to reduce these risks.

## 2. Organisation and arrangements

### **2.1 The Town Clerk**

- will ensure that no employee under their control undertakes maintenance of electrical equipment unless they are competent to do so;
- will ensure that the Administration Officer is made aware of the purchase of new electrical equipment so that it may be added to the list of equipment to be regularly inspected for safety;
- will ensure that electrical equipment under their control is suitable for the purpose for which it is used and that it is used properly. Electrical equipment for use outdoors must conform to a suitable level of protection against the elements. For use on a construction site, 110 volt equipment is to be preferred rather than 240v
- will ensure that simple user checks are in place for electrical equipment under their control. This includes the user or operator performing visual checks on the plug, cable and integrity of the casing of the equipment, etc. These checks should extend to ensuring that sockets are not overloaded e.g. inappropriate use of multiple adapters or “power bars”.
- will arrange for a list to be kept of portable electrical appliances used or kept in all Council workplaces and for those appliances to be regularly inspected for electrical safety. Records are to be kept of the inspection dates and any findings;
- where electrical safety testing reveals the need for repairs to be carried out then the Administration Officer will arrange for the person responsible for repairs and maintenance to be informed.

### **2.7 All staff**

- will report any safety defect in electrical equipment to the Administration Officer
- will refrain from undertaking any electrical repair or maintenance work which is outside the scope of their own competence;
- will refrain from bringing mains powered electrical equipment from home into the workplace. Where this is unavoidable specific permission should be sought from the line manager.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Visual checks (informal inspections) for users of electrical equipment

Users of electrical equipment can play a valuable safety role by carrying out very simple visual checks. Where portable electric tools are being used these should be checked before each use. Office equipment such as a desktop computer should be checked from time to time (e.g. if the equipment is moved or if new equipment is installed).

- Check for damage to the cable sheath. Light scuffing is permissible but cuts or similar damage which exposes the inner layers indicates that a repair is necessary.
- If bare wires are exposed do not use the equipment and remove the cable from service as soon as possible.
- Check that the plug is undamaged, that the pins are not bent, and that the cable grip is holding the outer insulation (not the inner wires).
- Check that joints are adequate. Taped joints should be replaced at the earliest opportunity with a plug and socket join.
- Check the surrounding area to make sure that the environment is suitable for the electrical equipment.
- Check the outer case of the equipment for cracks, dents loose screws or nuts etc.
- Check for burn marks or discoloration that could indicate overheating.
- For mains powered equipment, check that the socket is not overloaded. Never plug a multiple adapter into a multiple adapter in order to gain more power outlets!
- Report any faults or defects.