Damaged electrical equipment: checks for venue staff

Venue staff can help prevent electrical incidents by recognising visible problems and reporting them before equipment is used. Show the process for removing a suspect item from service, preventing accidental reuse and contacting the responsible person. Include hired and temporary equipment in the briefing. Keep equipment identification clear so the report reaches the right item.

UK user awareness; electrical repairs, installation and formal testing require appropriate competence and authority.

The practical principles

Look before use

Follow the user-check procedure for the equipment. Look for damaged cables, cracked plugs, exposed wires, burn marks or unusual heat. Consider whether the item is suitable for the location, especially around water or outdoors. A test label relates to a previous check and cannot guarantee present condition. Keep cables arranged to avoid damage and trip hazards.

Keep within authorised use

Use the equipment and power arrangements supplied for the task. Overloaded connections, improvised repairs and unsuitable equipment can create danger. Keep liquids away and follow shutdown instructions. If a fault appears, stop use and isolate only where safe and authorised. Mark or secure the item against reuse under the workplace procedure and tell the responsible person.

Get appropriate assistance

Electrical maintenance and testing require relevant competence. Staff should never open equipment or attempt a repair simply because they completed awareness training. Keep away from exposed live parts and protect others from approaching. For an electrical emergency, call appropriate emergency help and avoid contact with a person or object that may still be energised. Follow the emergency service’s instructions.

Work through a shift scenario

Fictional exercise: a server notices a damaged cable on a portable appliance. They stop using it and follow the safe isolation and reporting procedure, without touching exposed parts or opening the plug or casing. The item is identified so a colleague does not reconnect it. A suitably competent person determines the repair or replacement and return-to-use decision.

Avoid the common failure

A test sticker cannot guarantee that an appliance remains safe after damage. Equally, HSE does not prescribe annual portable-appliance testing for every item in every workplace. Maintenance should reflect the equipment and conditions. Ordinary users should not perform repairs because they have completed an awareness course.

A second situation to discuss

Fictional scenario: A portable heater has a damaged cable but a recent test sticker. A colleague asks to use it for one evening.

Keep it out of service, report the visible defect and follow the safe isolation and labelling procedure. Arrange an authorised alternative. The sticker does not override the current damage.

Use a working record

Record the specific arrangements below before the briefing. Keep the wording short enough for a colleague to use during the shift. Where a field does not apply, explain why; where information is missing, assign a person to resolve it. Store personal or sensitive details in the business's approved system.

- Equipment identity
- location
- visible defect
- stopped-use action
- person informed
- repair reference
- release authority

At the next handover, ask what changed, which action remains open and who now owns it. Close the record only when the agreed follow-up is complete. A recurring problem should inform the next briefing and the relevant operational procedure.

Check understanding

A recent test label proves current safety?

No; damage may have occurred since User checks still matter.

Exposed wiring should lead to:

Keeping clear and reporting Avoid exposure and use authorised assistance.

Electrical safety exercise: a display light cuts out when the cable moves

A display light flickers whenever its lead is moved. A colleague suggests taping the lead in a position where it stays on. What should the shift team do?

Compare your decision

Stop using the equipment. Follow the site's safe isolation and reporting procedure, keeping others away if there is an immediate hazard. Arrange competent assessment or replacement. Do not improvise a cable repair to finish the event.

Give the equipment identifier and the observed symptom in the report. Make sure the next setup crew can tell the item is out of service.

Sources and scope

- Source: https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm
- Source: https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/training-competence.htm

Original workplace examples and suggested record. Prepared 19 October 2026. Use the current linked guidance and the venue's procedures for operational decisions.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details