



**Australian Government**

**Comcare**

# HSR HELPER 4

## Issue: electrical safety in the workplace

As a health and safety representative (HSR) you have been elected by members of your work group to represent them in health and safety matters. Your role is not to 'fix' health and safety problems in the workplace, nor are you expected to be an expert on work health and safety (WHS) issues.

Further information on your role as a HSR can be found in Comcare's [Health and Safety Representative Handbook](#) and Comcare's [HSR pocket guide](#). Please make sure you are familiar with the purpose of your role as a HSR.

This Helper does not contain every circumstance you may encounter, but is designed to give you some ideas about what you can do, and where to find further information.

### WHY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY AN ISSUE?

Electrical risks are risks of death, electric shock or other injury caused directly or indirectly by electricity. Even the briefest contact with electricity can have serious consequences to a person's health and safety. Workers using electricity may not be the only ones at risk—we rely on electricity for our work and faulty electrical equipment and poor electrical installations may also cause death or injury to others.

Most injuries are the result of using faulty equipment (such as frayed electrical cords, faulty plugs or damaged equipment), non-tested personal or company-owned equipment and/or poor electrical awareness and practices.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Be aware that electrical safety is identified in the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* (Cth) as a specific hazard and specific measures need to be taken by your employer to address this.

There should be a regime in place in your organisation to test electrical equipment that is connected to a socket outlet. Certain operating environments that could be considered 'hostile' will require the use of residual current devices. Often, equipment that is tested will be tagged so you can visually identify whether the equipment has been tested.

### OTHER RESOURCES


[Managing Hazards landing page](#)

[Preventing harm – Electrical Risks](#)

[Code of Practice - Managing Electrical Risks in the Workplace](#)

[Virtual Office](#)

## Electrical safety action table

Objects	Hazards	Considerations
Liquid spillages	Electric shock due to contact with an electrical appliance that has been made 'live' after liquid has been spilt over it.	<p>Ensure appliance is disconnected from power before cleaning spill.</p> <p>Ensure appliances are not connected near sources of water.</p> <p>If equipment has been affected by liquid, remove it from service and ensure it is inspected and tested prior to use and the details are recorded.</p> <p>Ensure staff keep liquids well away from electrical appliances.</p>
Appliances	<p>Electrical appliance or tool has developed a fault, or is defective</p> 	<p>Inspect and test electrical appliances on a regular basis and record this information.</p> <p>Where equipment is identified for repair, it should be immediately removed from service and appropriately labelled to prevent further use. Secure the item away so it cannot inadvertently be used.</p>
Overloading	Overloading power circuit by plugging too many appliances into the same socket.	<p>If additional appliances are needed permanently, have a larger power socket installed by a competent person (e.g. 4 sockets).</p> <p>Discourage the use of adaptors and connection of unauthorised appliances which may overload the circuit dangerously.</p> <p>Consider installing a safety switch on the power supply or a residual current device on portable equipment.</p>
Data cables and extension leads	<p>Cables or leads located in trafficable area.</p> <p>Cables or leads with exposed wiring or damaged connections.</p>	<p>Keep cables, leads and conduit out of trafficable areas where they may become damaged.</p> <p>Where leads and cables must be located in trafficable areas, secure appropriately to protect them from damage and to prevent tripping (e.g. conduit to route cables, or use tape).</p> <p>As required have cables and leads inspected and tested on a regular basis and record this information.</p> <p>Install power points close to appliances to avoid the use of extension leads.</p> <p>Use extension leads for temporary connection only.</p> <p>Remove damaged leads and cables.</p>

Is your workplace safe? Use the table on the next page for a quick check.

## Things to consider

Print out this table to get you started on what to look for in your workplace with regards to electrical safety. Where you identify an issue then a further risk assessment might be warranted. Report issues to your supervisor, manager or via your internal hazard reporting system.

	True	Requires follow up
Electrical outlets are not overloaded with lots of plugs		
Electrical cords are in good condition—they are not cracked, frayed, or otherwise damaged		
Electrical cords do not run under carpets or furniture legs or near hot appliances		
Electrical appliances are used away from water		
People carry appliances by the handle, not the cord		
Electrical danger and warning signs are in place		
Electrical appliances that can get hot such as heaters, toasters and light bulbs are kept away from things that can burn		
Small kitchen appliances are turned off and/or unplugged when people are finished with them e.g. kettles, toasters, sandwich press.		
All extension cords, lights and appliances used outdoors are labelled for outdoor use		
There is an electrical testing program in place		
There is a record of electrical testing undertaken		