

A CLIENT GUIDE FROM 1STINTHEATRE

Inspection & testing, without the guesswork.

What your venue's electrical and mechanical installations and equipment legally require — and what the standards and best practice recommend.

Legislation, Approved Codes of Practice, British Standards, industry guidance: the volume of published material on inspection and testing is bewildering, and it isn't always obvious which documents impose legal duties and which simply offer advice. This guide brings the key references together in one place. It is a summary only and is not exhaustive — responsibility always rests with the equipment owner and/or the person in control of the premises. Unsure how any of it applies to you? We're happy to help.

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE — EVERY REFERENCE IS TAGGED:

Statutory

A legal requirement. You must comply.

Code of Practice

Recognised standards — the accepted way to demonstrate compliance.

Guidance

Advisory, but strongly recommended best practice.

01

THE FOUNDATIONS

General duties

Two pieces of legislation underpin everything else in this guide. They apply to every employer and every piece of work equipment.

STATUTORY

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Every employer must:

- Safeguard the health, safety and welfare of employees and anyone else affected by their work, including visitors
- Provide safe equipment, a safe place of work and a safe working environment
- Provide whatever instruction, training, information and supervision is needed
- Make people aware of the hazards present

STATUTORY

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

Work equipment must be:

- Suitable for its intended use
- Maintained in a safe condition
- Inspected and tested, where appropriate
- Provided with information to ensure safe use

At a glance — the headline intervals

The recommended frequencies that come up again and again for places of public entertainment. Full details and sources in the sections that follow.

1 YEAR

Electrical installation — routine check

IET Guidance Note 3 (entertainment venues)

3 YEARS

Electrical installation — max. between full tests

IET Guidance Note 3 (entertainment venues)

12 MONTHS

Lifting machines & complete assemblies

LOLER thorough examination

6 MONTHS

Lifting accessories

LOLER thorough examination

Intervals can differ where a written examination scheme is in place, or where the competent person carrying out the work sets different dates — see sections 02 and 03.

02 Electrical installations & equipment

The law requires electrical systems — fixed and portable — to be safe; the standards set out how, and how often, to prove it.

STATUTORY

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

All systems must:

- Be constructed so as to prevent danger
- Be maintained so as to remain safe
- Not be used beyond their capability

GUIDANCE

IET Guidance Note 3: 9th Edition — inspection & testing frequencies

Places of public entertainment and theatres:

- Routine check by a competent person — every 1 year
- Maximum period between inspection and testing — 3 years

Periodic inspections generally:

- Date of the first test recommended by the installation designer
- Dates of subsequent tests set by the competent person carrying out each test

CODE OF PRACTICE

BS 7671:2018+A4:2026 IET Wiring Regulations 18th Edition — Periodic Inspection & Testing

Intervals determined by assessment of:

- The type of installation and equipment
- How it is used and operated
- The frequency and quality of maintenance
- Any external influences
- Results of previous inspection and testing

GUIDANCE

HSE Guidance Note GS50 — Electrical Safety at Places of Public Entertainment

- Use a competent, appropriately qualified electrician
- Ensure the installation is designed, installed and maintained to the relevant standards
- Put a planned preventative maintenance programme in place
- Carry out simple visual checks routinely
- Ensure all inspection, testing and repairs are carried out by competent persons

GUIDANCE

IET Code of Practice for In-service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment, 5th Edition — portable appliances (PAT)

- No fixed statutory interval — the law requires equipment to be maintained in a safe condition
- Frequency should be risk-based: consider usage, environment and user
- Combine regular user checks and formal visual inspections with testing where appropriate
- Keep records of inspection and testing as evidence that equipment is being maintained

03

FLYING & LIFTING

Raise-and-lower installations & accessories

Hemp sets · winch sets · counterweight sets · safety curtains · hoists and trusses · shackles · roundslings · wire rope assemblies · eyebolts · rigging screws

STATUTORY

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)

Thorough examination by a competent person:

- Lifting machines (e.g. winches, hoists) — every twelve months
- Lifting accessories (e.g. shackles, roundslings) — every six months
- Or, in accordance with a written examination scheme
- After significant modification or repair
- After installation, before first use

Worth knowing: it is generally accepted within the entertainment industry that a permanently installed arrangement of lifting machine and accessories — i.e. a winch connected to a bar via steel wire ropes and shackles — forms a complete lifting assembly that can be examined every twelve months, as a machine.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment (*The Yellow Book*)

- All mechanical installations must comply with PUWER and LOLER
- Premises should be designed, constructed, maintained and managed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all occupants
- All lifting equipment and any permanently suspended equipment should be tested by a competent person, usually an appropriate engineer

CODE OF PRACTICE

ABTT Code of Practice for the Theatre Industry — Part 2: Flying

- Competent persons to undertake thorough examinations
- Thorough examinations to be in line with the LOLER Regulations

04 Static mechanical installations

Static lighting and scenery bars · curtain tracks · 'leg' bars · speaker mounting points

CODE OF PRACTICE

Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment (The Yellow Book)

Mechanical installations should be:

- Designed, constructed, maintained and managed to ensure health and safety
- Provided with appropriate certificates of inspection

STATUTORY

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

Work equipment must be:

- Suitable for its intended use
- Maintained in a safe condition
- Inspected and tested, where appropriate
- Provided with information to ensure safe use

WHEN, NOT WHETHER

05 Load testing

The competent person should decide whether a load test is required — it is not an automatic requirement, in most cases.

Load testing is normally carried out:

- After installation of the equipment
- Following significant repair or modification
- Following a thorough examination after an unexpected occurrence
- If requested by an insurance company or licensing authority

Who counts as a competent person?

Defined by the LOLER ACOP and Guidance as someone with **“such appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the lifting equipment to be thoroughly examined, as will enable them to detect defects or weaknesses, and to assess their importance in relation to the safety and continued use of the equipment”**.

Need a hand staying compliant?

From PAT testing and maintenance to installation and venue support — talk to us about a planned inspection programme for your venue.

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