

4.1 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN EMPLOYEE

The Electricity at Work Regulations require two things of you as an employee. Firstly, that you should co-operate with your employer to ensure that safety policies are carried out, and secondly, that you take whatever steps are necessary to ensure safety in matters within your control.

Having read Section 1, you should now be aware of the range of dangers associated with electricity. This section sets out the contribution that you can make to avoid these dangers.

4.2 LOOKING AFTER YOUR OWN WORKPLACE

We'll start by looking at the use of electricity in your own place of work.

Question 4.1

- a) List all the electrical appliances in your immediate work area. Include those not actually plugged in at the time you look. You may need to use a certain amount of judgement as to exactly what is *your* area. If you have your own office, for example, that's easy but if you share an open plan floor, it may not be so obvious.

Most people, however, have some part of their workplace that they can call their own. If you don't, just choose an area where you sometimes work for the purposes of this exercise.

- b) Draw a sketch of your work area showing the positions of all the electric sockets and switches.

1. Look for signs of danger in appliances, such as:
 - cracks or splits in the lead
 - leads not securely fastened at either end
 - broken outer casing
 - incorrectly operating switches.
2. Look for potential dangers in the way appliances are used:
 - convector fires too near to flammable material (eg coat stands)
 - long trailing leads to appliances
 - appliances operated near water (eg kettles on draining boards).
3. Switch off/unplug appliances before working on appliances; for example:
 - changing bits on an electric drill
 - clearing a paper jam from a photocopier.
4. Reporting faults - there needs to be a clearly established channel of communication.
5. Action in the event of emergency. Do people know where the mains switch and the first aid kit is situated? Do they know the procedure for reporting accidents?
6. Action in the event of a power failure. Unless appliances are switched off, they may start up unexpectedly when the power comes back on.