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FACT SHEET

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

All businesses must test & tag their electrical equipment on a regular basis.

The NSW OHS Regulation (2001) contains very specific directions on the safety of electrical equipment in the workplace. In particular all seafood wholesalers and retailers need to have all their electrical equipment tested and tagged on a regular basis to ensure that they do not pose a risk. This testing must not place in isolation but rather as part of a scheduled risk management process.

The reason for this need is because our workplaces are considered a **'hostile working environment'**. This is a working environment where the electrical equipment is normally subjected to events or operating conditions likely to result in damage to the equipment or a reduction in its expected life span. This includes, but is not limited to physical or mechanical damage and as well as exposure to:

- moisture,
- heat,
- vibration,
- corrosive chemicals,
- dust,
- fumes.

Some electrical equipment is used in a situation that poses a risk to the operator due to the nature of its location and the type of use. In order to determine the level of risk and hence the level of control or management a risk assessment should be carried out by a 'competent person' in accordance with the risk management and consultation provisions of the Regulation. The risk assessment will determine whether there is a risk to employees and others so the employer should ensure that the electrical equipment is inspected, tested and tagged in accordance with the recommendations of AS 3760:2001.

There are a range of control measures that can be used in managing electrical safety:

- routine visual checks,
- regular inspection,
- maintenance,
- repair,
- replacement,
- use of residual current devices (RCDs)**,
- and, where warranted, testing of identified electrical equipment.

The inspection and testing of electrical equipment must be done by a 'competent person' as defined in this Regulation—if in doubt, the person authorising the inspection and testing program must obtain advice from a person qualified in electrical matters, an electrician, electrical contractor or specialist testing provider.

Further Information

1. Call WorkCover Assistance 13.10.50
According to WorkCover, workplaces should use the "Industry Code of Practice: Technical Guidance" for assistance in complying with the electrical inspection and testing requirements of the Regulation. The code adopts, without alteration, the Australian Standard, AS 3760:2001 - "In-service safety inspection and testing of electrical equipment". This Standard provides employers with practical guidance on the inspection and testing of, and record keeping about, electrical equipment they may use at their workplace.
2. Use the Electrical Equipment Inspection Checklist (Publication 4409) provided by WorkCover. This publication gives more information on when to inspect, tag and record information about your electrical appliances and also includes a sample worksheet that you can use for your risk assessments.
3. Call the OHS Industry Officer
at the MFMA on 02.9552.1611

The specific requirements are described in the NSW OHS Regulation (2001)

In particular Clause 62 states that:

- An employer must ensure that any risk of injury from electricity at a place of work is eliminated or, if elimination is not reasonably practicable, the risk is controlled.

- An employer must ensure that:
 - all electrical installations, electrical articles and associated equipment at a place of work are safe to use and are regularly inspected, tested and maintained to ensure they remain safe for use and are repaired or replaced if unsafe, and
 - plant is not used in conditions likely to give rise to electrical hazards, and
 - appropriate work systems are provided to prevent inadvertent energising of plant connected to the electricity supply and
 - any electrical cord extension sets, flexible cables or fittings:
 - are located where they are not likely to be damaged (including damage by liquids) or are protected against any damage, and
 - are not laid across passageways or accessways unless they are suitably protected, and
 - adequate signs to warn of the hazards, and (if necessary) restrict access, are provided at or near any area in which there is a risk of exposure of persons to hazards arising from electricity.

Clause 65 then goes on to state that:

- An employer must ensure that a record is made and kept of all inspections and tests made and maintenance carried out on electrical articles and electrical installations...

- In particular, the following information is to be recorded:
 - the name of the person who made the inspection or carried out the test or maintenance,
 - the date on which, or dates over which, the inspection was made or the test or maintenance was carried out,
 - the result or outcome of the inspection, test or maintenance,
 - the date by which the next inspection and test must be carried out.