

1. Introduction

This policy deals with how the Council addresses the risk from electricity for the safety of its tenants, employees and visitors to Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) buildings where DBC is the dutyholder.

Where DBC is the freeholder it should be made clear in the lease/licence who is the dutyholder and who is responsible for the maintenance of the electrical system within the building. There should be a clear record of who is the dutyholder and confirmation given to the lease/licence holder that they are the dutyholder.

Housing tenants must be informed that they not permitted to undertake work on the electrical installation within their property. The tenants must report defects to their housing officer.

Where there is doubt DBC will be assumed to be the dutyholder. DBC may be a dutyholder of buildings that contains no DBC employees.

Appendix I: details the DBC Estate, listing the address, dutyholder, the Group Manager for the Service Area responsible and location of records. This will be completed as part of the dutyholders health & safety workstream.

It is not within the scope of this policy to determine the frequency of the Electrical Installation Condition Survey or the frequency that premises are to be re-wired. The DBC estate is varied and the condition of each property within the estate will differ. Remedial works including rewiring will be determined by the latest Electrical Installation Condition Survey or any specific improvement works programme.

2. Legal Duties – Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

Besides the specific legal duties detailed in the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, further general duties are contained within the Health & Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 particularly s2, 3, 4 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 as amended.

Specific duties and guidance on complying with the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 are detailed in **Appendix II**.

No DBC staff member is to undertake work on an electrical system or tamper/bypass or remove any safety device unless they as employed as a competent person as defined by Regulation 16 of The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Disregarding this aspect of the policy will be considered as gross misconduct due to the risk to themselves and others.

Contractors (including subcontractors) working on electrical system must present their qualifications and up to date membership of the professional body for DBC to confirm their credentials prior to permits to work being issued. It is not sufficient for a main contractor to vouch for a subcontractor.

Prior to any work being undertaken on electrical systems, risk assessments, method statements and permit to works must be completed. These must be task and site specific. Phraseology such as “*appropriate PPE*”, “*suitable precautions*” will not be deemed suitable or sufficient.

Unless DBC checks the competency of contractors/subcontractors it will be difficult for DBC to rely on a due defence as defined by Regulation 29 of The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

Absolute/reasonably practicable duties.

Duties in some of the Regulations are subject to the qualifying term ‘*reasonably practicable*’. Where qualifying terms are absent the requirement in the regulations are said to be absolute. If the requirement in a regulation is ‘absolute’ **the requirement must be met regardless of cost or any other consideration.**

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to assist DBC comply with the legislation and protect the safety of employees, co-tenants and visitors to DBC buildings where DBC is the duty holder.

The major risks arising from electricity is electrocution, burns and fire as a result of overheating electrical appliances and circuits.

4. Scope

This policy applies to DBC staff, including agency, temporary workers, work experience, volunteers and those that may be employed via a Government Scheme that are likely to be exposed to risks from electricity. Contractors/subcontractors working on DBC premises must also follow this policy.

The risk of injury for most visitors to buildings where DBC is the dutyholder is extremely remote.

5. How DBC Controls of the risks from Electricity

All premises that DBC is a dutyholder will have an Electrical Installation Condition Survey undertaken by a competent person on the handover of the building after construction, after major refurbishment or re-wire, and then periodically thereafter as recommended by the competent person.

5.1 Electrical Installation Condition Survey

Electrical Installation Condition Survey must be documented and detail the extent of the survey detailing any parts of the system not included together with an explanation why they were excluded. The survey report should identify any defects and **state whether the system is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.**

Defects will be identified as:

Code 1 (C1) 'Danger present'. Risk of injury. Immediate remedial action required.

Code 2 (C2) 'Potentially dangerous'. Urgent remedial action required

Code 3 (C3) 'Improvement recommended'.

FI Further Investigation required without delay

For DBC to achieve compliance C1, C2 and FI faults on Electrical Condition Survey must be addressed. The timescales and remedial work needed will be guided by competent person.

In addition to the Electrical Installation Condition Survey employees have a duty to undertake pre-user checks of any electrical equipment they use. The extent of the pre-user check will be determined by the risk assessments for that service area. In some service areas such as adventure playgrounds, and cemeteries this may be a formal daily check.

Any defects must be notified to the line manager. Any exposure of conductors* will result in the equipment being taken out of service.

5.2 Specific requirements of the legislation

5.2.1 Regulation 4 – Requires systems to be maintained.

This will generally be via Electrical Installation Condition Survey, pre-user checks, and prohibiting the use of defective electrical systems.

5.2.2 Regulation 6 – Controls in adverse conditions

This section will apply to electrical equipment used externally e.g. external sockets, security lights, CCTV cameras, external electrically powered equipment, or in equipment used hostile environments such as the vehicle workshops, CSG hanger, cemetery workshop etc.

Depending on the use and location of the equipment/electrical outlet they should have the correct ingress protection (IP) rating (See **Appendix III**).

No cable or extension lead is to be placed over or across a traffic route.

5.2.3 Regulation 7 – Insulation, protection and placing of conductors

This requires conductors to be insulated or other controls to prevent contact with conductors.

5.2.4 Regulation 8 - Earthing or other suitable precautions

Earthing or other suitable means is required to prevent danger arising when any conductor (other than a circuit conductor) which may become charged due to use or a fault in the system.

5.2.5 Regulation 11 Means for protecting from excess of current

The means of protection is likely to be in the form of fuses or circuit breakers or it may be provided by some other means capable of interrupting the current or reducing it to a safe value. All such devices must be working correctly.

5.2.6 Regulation 12 - Cutting off the supply and isolation

Isolation is having suitable means of ensuring that the supply will remain switched off and inadvertent reconnection prevented.

To assist in identifying the correct circuits to be isolated each consumer unit/fuse box must be labelled to identify the circuits.

This will require the use of lock off devices where the key is held by the person undertaking the work on that circuit. On older systems this may require the removal of the trip device, or fuse to ensure that the circuit cannot be made live. Control over isolation is to be detailed within the risk assessments and method statements of contractors/subcontractors.

5.2.7 Regulation 13 - Precautions for work on equipment made dead

This requires that adequate precautions shall be taken to prevent electrical equipment, which has been made dead in order to prevent danger while work is carried out on or near that equipment, from becoming electrically charged during any work on the equipment/system.

5.2.8 Regulation 14 Work on or near live conductors

The default position of DBC is that work must **not** occur on live conductors unless:

- 1) *it is unreasonable in **all** the circumstances for it to be dead; and*
- 2) *it is reasonable in all the circumstances for him to be at work on or near it while it is live; and*
- 3) *suitable precautions (including where necessary the provision of suitable protective equipment) are taken to prevent **injury***

Work on or near live conductors must be justified in the risk assessments.

5.3.9 Work near underground cables

Underground power cables present a risk of serious or fatal injury during excavation or similar work, particularly to people using hand tools (eg picks, concrete breakers etc).

Precautions **MUST** include:

- (a) mapping, recording and marking on site of cable runs;
- (b) use of cable-locating devices;
- (c) safe digging practices.

Well-established advice on working near underground cables is given in *Avoiding danger from underground services* <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg47.pdf>

No digging of the ground must commence prior to above controls being taken. Such measures must also be contained within the risk assessment and method statement.

Should DBC staff authorise such works without ensuring that above controls measures have been implemented then this will be treated as gross misconduct.

5.30 Work near overhead power lines

When working at height using MEWPs, cherry pickers, towers, etc the risk assessment must consider overhead cables.

Well-established advice on work near overhead power lines is given in HSE guidance notes "*Avoiding danger from overhead power lines*" and "*Working safely near overhead electricity power lines*". This advice should be incorporated in the risk assessments and method statements.

5.31 Portable Appliances

These are dealt with in a separate policy.

6. General Duties of Employees

All staff must:

- Report defective electrical circuits and defective electrical equipment to their line manager, initially verbally and then via email.
- Only use electrical equipment they are authorised to use (there is tacit consent to use office equipment). Unless authorised and trained to do so staff should not generally be using power tools.
- Only use electrical equipment (other than office equipment) that they are competent to use either trained by DBC, or a previous employer (which be demonstrated by an up to date certificate)
- Not to use their own personal electrical equipment.

Line Managers

Act on reports of defective electrical equipment from staff. If in doubt as to the safety of electrical equipment it must be quarantined by taping the lead and plug to the appliance to prevent use.

Group Managers

Ensure defects identified by the Electrical Installation Condition Survey are acted upon, this may require the commissioning of remedial works.

** Regulation 2 defines a conductor as 'a conductor of electrical energy'. This means any material which is capable of conducting electricity (electricity is synonymous with electrical energy) and therefore includes both metals and all other conducting materials. The definition is not limited to conductors intended to carry current and so includes, for example, metal structures, salt water, ionised gases and conducting particles.*