

Electrical safety: what is a competent person?

The [Electrical Safety Regulation 2013 \(Qld\)](#) defines a competent person as someone who has acquired, through training, qualifications, experience or a combination of these, the knowledge and skill enabling the person to inspect and test electrical equipment.

The employer or self-employed person (the principal) is responsible for determining that the person who carries out inspection, testing and tagging of electrical equipment has the required competencies. Principals should be aware of this responsibility and that they are accountable for the ongoing actions of the 'competent person'.

In the event of an electrical incident the following information may be requested from the school:

- documentation that the testing and tagging process was completed correctly;
- documentation or verification that the person fulfils the requirements of a competent person for testing and tagging; or
- information as to how this competency is maintained over time (i.e. refresher course, consistent use of the equipment, time allocation, confidence and competence in using the equipment).

By choosing to complete testing and tagging 'in-house' the school (and in turn the department) takes on these responsibilities. For this reason, it is preferable to out-source this work to an appropriate 'expert/suitably qualified tradesperson'. The licensed electrical contractor (electrician) takes on the role of the 'competent person' and is responsible for ensuring the work completed is electrically safe. A record of the work should be retained by the school, which provides evidence that the test and tag regime and visual checks are completed. If an electrical incident occurs, the principal can verify that testing and tagging was completed by a competent person by referring back to the contractor who completed the work.

Important information

The installation of safety switches provides full time, ongoing protection from a broader range of electrical risks and will significantly reduce the number of items that require testing and tagging.

Schools should be mindful of external contractors who only 'test and tag' i.e. they are restricted in the types of electrical work they can perform and may not be able to complete other types of electrical work that may be needed to make the electrical equipment safe.

The true worth of the testing and tagging process is that an experienced and competent person has inspected the item and has taken appropriate action regarding any problems. The skills to effectively achieve this may not be able to be acquired during a short course.

Testing and tagging is only one component of a system to ensure electrical safety and is only 'valid' at the time of testing and tagging.

Competency and course information

The competencies required to inspect, test and tag electrical equipment are stated in Australian Standard [AS/NZS 3760 In-service safety inspection and testing of electrical equipment](#). These competencies as well as course information are listed on the Electrical Safety Office website [here](#). This link includes information on the course - 30239-QLD *Course in Conduct In-service Safety Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment (other than fixed wire equipment)* and Registered Training Organisations (RTO) that deliver the course.

Further information

- [Guide to Managing Electrical Safety in Education Queensland Schools](#)
- Contact Regional [Senior Health and Safety Consultants](#) for health and safety enquiries