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Information sheet regarding the use of electrical devices
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UNIVERSITÄT BERN

Occupational safety, health protection, and environmental safety

Information sheet regarding the safe use of electrical devices

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Risk Management Office
Martin Schuppler
Hochschulstrasse 6
3012 Bern
martin.schuppler@bt.unibe.ch
+41 31 631 55 80

UNIVERSITÄT BERN

Use of electrical devices on the premises of the University of Bern

1. Basic premise

Most accidents involving electricity result from the use of faulty or unsuitable electrical equipment or installations.

2. The following rules must be observed if you are using electrical devices at the university

Owners and users of electrical devices are responsible for ensuring they are fault-free and working properly.

Electrically powered devices such as coffee machines, drinks dispensers, kettles, and the like must not be set up or used along escape routes.

3. Thinking about quality

Think about quality when buying electrical devices and look for Swiss certification symbols such as the safety symbol issued by the ESTI (Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations) – the website http://www.esti.admin.ch has details of devices covered by safety symbols – and the SEV compliance symbol issued by Electrosuisse.

4. Operation

Only use devices which comply with safety standards and have been kept in good condition. Check devices, cables, and plugs for any damage before use. It is essential to read any operating instructions provided with devices. Remove dust from ventilation slots on a regular basis.

5. Faulty devices

Disconnect devices from the mains immediately if any faults occur (press the emergency off button or switch the mains switch to OFF and pull out the plug). Never use defective electrical devices. If you discover an electrical device is defective or being operated in a non-compliant manner, please inform your line manager or the owner immediately. If possible, disconnect the device from the mains and remove it so it cannot be used any further by, say, locking it away or even removing the plug (particularly if the device needs to be disposed of).

6. Hazardous situations

- Electrocution if someone touches a live part.
- Burns as a result of excessive surface temperatures. Secondary accidents as a result of falls.
- Fires mainly break out through a series of incidental factors:

- Prevention of heat discharge from electrical devices due to them being blocked in or otherwise confined.
- Failure of components such as temperature limiters. This may cause other components to be exposed to higher electrical currents and overheat.
- Electrical devices being placed on or too close to combustible materials.
- Maintenance of devices being skipped or not performed properly.

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7. Safety features

Safety features on devices must not be manipulated or deactivated under any circumstances.

8. Leads and extension cables

When pulling plugs out of sockets, always hold the plug itself. Do not route leads or extension cables across access routes. Plastic cable ducts may be used if necessary. It is better to install additional sockets. Use 'suitable' extension cables with a maximum length of 5 m. Do not connect more than one multiple socket in a row. With these kinds of 'cascade' arrangements, very high levels of current can flow through the wall socket causing the leads and plugs to overheat (fire hazard). Do not route connecting leads through door frames or over sharp edges, corners, or moving parts. Electrical cables may overheat if they become pinched, while cables with tears or slits may give dangerous electric shocks if touched.

9. Wet conditions

Never use wet electrical devices. Do not use unsuitable devices in wet conditions either (rain, damp environment) and never touch electrical devices with wet hands.

10. Saving energy

Switch off electric devices when not in use and/or pull out the plug. Electrical devices providing heat, such as fan heaters, coffee machines, or kettles, should be disconnected from the mains when not in use. Devices kept in standby mode use up energy unnecessarily and increase the risk of fire. It is better either to pull out the plug or, if possible, to use so-called master-and-slave socket arrangements. With master-and-slave socket arrangements, all connected devices are also disconnected from the mains when the main device is switched off.

11. Repairs and disposal

Repair and maintenance of electrical devices may only be performed by electricians. If a device is beyond repair, it must be disposed of in the proper manner as per the relevant disposal directive.

12. Restrictions

In the event of failure to comply with safety provisions, the Risk Management Office or persons it has authorised (e.g. the caretaker service) may prohibit further use of a device. Operation may have to stop immediately in more serious cases.

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