

BATTERY SAVER

Battery-powered instruments are fine—except that if you are like us, you often forget to turn off the ones without the ever friendly and reassuring pilot light. This results in run-down batteries it seems, just when you need them most. Things sometimes get so bad that I forget to unplug the soldering irons at the end of the day. If it was not for plated tips, I would have had to spend a small fortune replacing burned-up tips.

In desperation I made several small battery-powered neon relaxation (RC) oscillators (Fig. 1) that I turn on

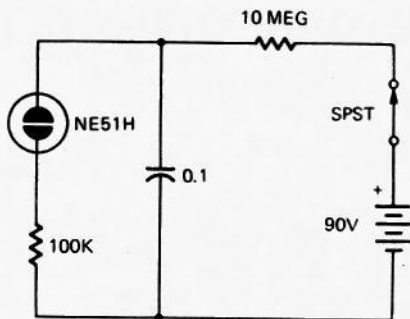


FIG. 1

whenever I turn on a battery-powered instrument. These are located strategically throughout the shop so that the blinking neon lamp is a reminder that a battery-powered instrument is on. The operating life should equal the shelf life of the batteries. Mine have been operating for over two years.

The soldering iron problem I solved in an equally simple manner. A neon lamp assembly wired in the soldering iron stand (Fig. 2) lights to

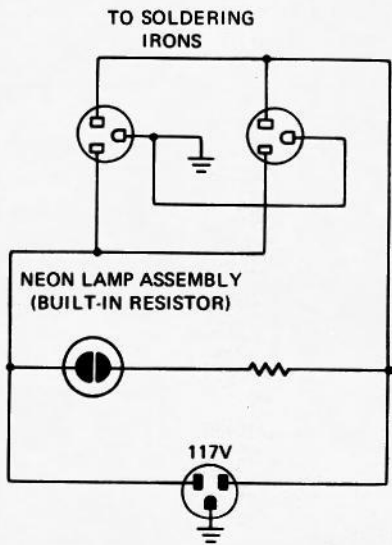


FIG. 2

show that the stand and soldering iron(s) are plugged in.

These may seem like a lot of work to solve simple problems, but they save in frustration and replacement costs!—*William D. Kranengel, Jr.*