Weekly Safety Topic

Electrical Safety

Electrical Hazards

We know that, if used improperly, electricity presents safety hazards. Yet serious injuries and deaths still occur regularly because of someone's improper use of electrical equipment—perhaps operating it with wet hands or use of electrical equipment without realizing it was defective—or even foolishly taking a chance on working with equipment known to be defective.

What can you do to prevent you and your co-workers from becoming victims of electrical accidents?

- Make sure that the equipment you use is properly grounded; grounding drains dangerous electrical current leaks away to the earth. If an electrical device is grounded, its cord will have a three-wire plug and require a three-way receptacle to accommodate it. Grounding is especially important when the equipment is used on metal surfaces. (Equipment need not be grounded if it is double-insulated; this is usually indicated by a label.)
- Avoid the use of extension cords, especially those that violate safety features by accommodating three-way plugs to two-way receptacles. If you must use extension cords, use heavy-duty ones. Check for proper grounding and exposed wires, as well as the condition of cords, plugs, and insulation.
- Always remove cords from receptacles by the plug; pulling cords from receptacles from across a room damages them. Be sure that cords are not pinched in doors, drawers, equipment, or anything else, as this also damages the cords.
- Do not allow electrical cords to be on the floor in hallways where they are walked on, or have oil or grease spilled on them; this harms electrical cords and increases the possibility of accidents.
- Inspect electrical equipment before using it; look for broken or bent plugs, frayed cords, bare wires, smoke, sparks from switches or controls, liquids spilled in or on equipment, or erratic operation. If you notice any of these defects, or if you feel a tingle when you touch controls, do not use the equipment; tag it and send it for repair. In addition to being a shock hazard, defective equipment can cause fires. Equipment should be inspected regularly by electricians.
- Do not try to repair electrical equipment you are not familiar with, either at work or at home.

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• Never place electrical appliances like radios or coffeepots near sinks where they may fall in and injure people using the sinks.

• Never operate electrical appliances with wet hands. Wetness, especially perspiration, decreases skin resistance greatly and can mean the difference between a slight shock and a fatal shock.

Electricity can accomplish a variety of things and make life easier for us. It can be a threat to one's well-being, however, when used by someone who does not know or apply rules for electrical safety.