

WORKING WITH ELECTRICAL TOOLS

Each year workers suffer shock when handling electrical tools and equipment. To protect workers against the hazards of electricity, teach them the basic facts about the causes of shock and death. One of the big problems in understanding the dangers of electrical shock are the mistaken belief those only high voltages kill. It's not the voltage that kills, but the amount of current that passes through the body. The condition and placement of the body has a lot to do with the chance of getting a shock.

Water and electricity can be a fatal combination. Damp areas and metal objects can offer good shortcuts for electricity to reach the ground. If a worker's hands are sweaty, if socks and shoes are moist or damp, if the floor is wet, or if the worker is standing in a puddle of water, the moisture will allow more current to pass through the body. If work is to be done with metal objects or in damp areas, workers should recognize the hazards and take necessary precautions. These precautions include rubber gloves and boots, rubber mats, insulated tools, and rubber sheets, which can be used to cover, exposed metal.

Remembering a few tips can help avoid electrical accidents:

- Treat every electric wire as if it were a live one.
- Inspect equipment and extension cords before each use.
- Take faulty equipment or plugs with bent or missing prongs out of service for repair.
- Only qualified electricians should repair electrical equipment or work on energized lines.
- If a plug doesn't have three prongs or if the receptacle doesn't have three openings, make sure the tool is grounded in some other way before use.
- Never try to bypass an electrical system by cutting off the third prong of a plug.
- Turn off the power and report the smell of hot or burning plastic, smoke, sparks or flickering lights.
- Stop using a tool or appliance if a slight shock or tingling is felt.
- Never disconnect an electrical plug by pulling on the cord.
- Whenever working on an electric circuit, the circuit should be turned off and locked out at the circuit breaker or fuse box to ensure that the circuit cannot be accidentally turned on.
- Those who regularly work on or around energized electrical equipment should be trained in emergency response and CPR.

In wet, winter months, extra caution should be observed when working with electrical equipment or when working near grounded objects.

