

How to Avoid Workplace Electrocution

Many victims of workplace electrocution are the people who maintain electrical equipment.

Here are some reminders for staying safe while making this equipment safe:

- Before you do maintenance or repairs on electrically powered equipment, you need to isolate the power source. Lock out and tag out switches when repairing equipment. That's why there are slots for locks on electrical circuit breakers.
- Follow all safety procedures for locking out equipment.
- Never work on a switch or outlet connected to a live (closed) circuit. First, turn off the circuit breaker and put a lock and warning sign on the breaker.
- When you are making adjustments to portable powered equipment, disconnect it but keep the cord in your sight so someone else can't plug it in and give you a shock. Better yet, use a locking device made for the plugs of portable tools and equipment. Several types of these devices are available at safety supply stores.
- Before using electrical cords, equipment or tools, check them carefully. Pull any damaged or defective equipment out of service and repair it right away.
- Install a ground fault interrupter on any outlet near a water source. Never work on electric equipment or wiring in a wet environment.
- Take off extra jewelry such as rings or bracelets when working with electricity.
- Never tape breakers in the "on" position. This interferes with their proper operation.
- Don't store combustible materials such as paper, wood, flammable liquids or paint in main service panel rooms because heat or sparks from an electrical source can start a fire.

- Keep main electrical equipment rooms locked at all times so that only authorized people can enter. Lock all electrical boxes that are outside the secured area.
- Keep the pathways to all electrical panels free of obstructions.
- Clean motors and keep them free of dirt, oily deposits and dust.
- Don't keep electrical equipment or motors in inaccessible locations such as attics.
- Maintain power cords and never use worn, broken, improperly repaired or patched cords.
- Replace any equipment that emits sparks, stalls or runs hot.

You must be trained and authorized to do repairs on electrical equipment. Do not attempt this kind of work unless you're qualified.