

A Real Shock

Get careless around electricity and you could be in for a real shock. In fact, the shock could be so real it kills you.

Here are some common accident causes:

- Moving equipment such as cranes, high loads and pipe near energized power lines. If it is necessary to work near lines, have the utility company turn off the power or shield the lines from contact. Keep at least 10 feet away from energized lines - further away for higher voltages.
- Handling electrical equipment with damp hands. Using a power tool outdoors on a rainy day or reaching from a sink to a power switch are classic ways to get electrocuted.
- Failing to use a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter when needed. A GFCI protects you from shock by shutting off the power instantly in case of a short. Use a GFCI when you use powered equipment outdoors, in basements and around moisture.
- Tampering with electrical equipment and making unauthorized, unqualified repairs. Incorrectly wired equipment has caused many a serious shock.
- Removing the third prong on a plug so it will fit into a two-prong outlet. That third prong provides a ground and keeps you from getting shocked in case of an electrical short.
- Allowing electrical equipment to become worn and damaged. You won't be protected from shock by insulation cracked from wear or altered because it has become wet. Keep cords and cables away from traffic areas.
- Failure to wear the right Personal Protective Equipment. Persons qualified to do electrical work must protect themselves with the appropriate gear - rubber footwear, rubber gloves protected by leather gloves, non-conductive hardhats and other special clothing.
- Failure to follow safety procedures. Lockout/tagout programs are designed to prevent someone from accidentally turning on the power while someone is working on the electrical system.
- Ignoring signs of electrical malfunction. The smell of burning insulation, the sound of a motor running too slowly, flickering lights and equipment which goes on and off are just a few of the possible symptoms.
- Ignoring a minor electrical shock. Under slightly different circumstances you or a co-worker can receive a deadly shock from the same source.

This has been just a sampling of the mistakes which can lead to electrical shock. Use it to examine your own potential for an electrical injury.