

FTR Now

Ministry of Labour Blitz of Industrial Workplaces for Electrical Hazards

Date: November 11, 2008

The Ministry of Labour is currently conducting a blitz of workplaces, where the regulation for Industrial Establishments applies, to ensure compliance with the electrical hazard provisions of the regulation. Inspectors will take a “zero tolerance” approach to any contraventions.

“Since 1998 there have been 69 workers killed, 263 critically injured and 844 workers who received more than minor injuries as a result of electrical hazards.

About half of these incidents involved workers who were working on electrical equipment while it was energized. This included 28 workers who were killed and 255 who received serious burns from ‘arc flash’ (an electrical explosion). Other causes of injury included malfunctioning meters, faulty equipment and using equipment in close proximity to live electricity.

The most common type of work to result in an electrocution was repair and maintenance. The main dangers of electrical hazards are electrical shock and/or fire.

In the past decade, 21 per cent of electrical-related fatalities have involved workers in an electrical trade such as electricians. However, the bulk – 79 per cent – involved workers in other occupations. These included maintenance workers, millwrights, apprentices, labourers, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) technicians, equipment operators, supervisors and drivers.”

See MOL Press Release dated October 27, 2008.

YOUR EXISTING ELECTRICAL SAFETY PROGRAM

Do you have an existing written electrical safety program? Inspectors will be checking your written lockout procedures under section 42 of Regulation 851 to ensure that your workers are not working on live electrical equipment unless authorized under section 42.1. Are you aware that the use of a voltage meter to confirm that equipment is de-energized is treated as working live, because the potential for an electrical hazard still exists? Do your written procedures identify the personal protective equipment required for testing and trouble shooting under section 42.1(2) of Regulation 851? Is an electrical hazard analysis conducted prior to commencing the work? Does it include both a shock hazard analysis and an arc flash analysis? Inspectors will be focusing on these and other electrical issues when they visit your workplace during this blitz and they will be interviewing

your workers to verify that your written procedures have been effectively implemented.

NEW CSA STANDARD Z462 – WORKPLACE ELECTRICAL SAFETY

This MOL blitz corresponds with the imminent release of CSA's new standard Z462 on Workplace Electrical Safety. What steps is your organization taking to incorporate this standard into your existing electrical safety program? Our understanding of the risks associated with electrical hazards and the personal protective equipment required to address those risks continues to improve over time. Are your electricians using the appropriate rubber insulating gloves when they are using a meter for testing and troubleshooting electrical equipment? Unsafe practices that were once considered acceptable are no longer considered safe. Depending upon the status of your electrical safety program you may need to upgrade it to meet CSA's new standard Z462. If you contract out your electrical work, what is your electrical contractor doing to meet the requirements of Z462?

ARE YOU ASKING SOMEONE TO WORK LIVE?

As the MOL press release points out, about half of the electrical incidents involved workers who were working on electrical equipment while it was energized. We do not know what percentage of these incidents occurred because someone specifically asked for the work to be done live, but that does occur. The times when working live is justified under section 42.1 are rare and should only be authorized after a written energized electrical work permit has been issued in accordance with the procedures established under Z462. When you ask someone to work on live electrical equipment without locking it out, what you are really asking them to do is to put their life on the line. Each year electrical workers are killed or horribly maimed because of the failure to appreciate the hazards associated with this 'simple' request. Everyone takes a risk when asking someone to work live and anyone considering a request to work live is required to independently assess whether the request can be complied with safely.

If you have any questions about the Ministry of Labour's Blitz on Electrical Hazards, your existing electrical safety program or CSA's new standard Z462, please contact [Scott G. Thompson](mailto:scott-thompson@hicksmorley.com) at 416-864-7283 (scott-thompson@hicksmorley.com); [Robert Little](mailto:robert-little@hicksmorley.com) at 416-864-7332 (robert-little@hicksmorley.com); or any other member of the firm's [Occupational Health](#) group.

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