

Safety and health alert

12/04 Electrician electrocuted

Incident

An electrician sustained a fatal electric shock whilst carrying out work inside a low voltage switchboard. The licensed electrician had carried out some electrical tests on a compressor. The compressor had been taken to the switchboard and then directly wired to the switchboard.

At the conclusion of the tests, the electrician attempted to re-attach insulating tape to the terminals he had been using within the switchboard. One of his hands came into contact with the adjacent live terminals, resulting in fatal electrical injuries.

Factors

- The electrician was working in close proximity to live uninsulated terminals.
- The terminals for the incoming power supply could have been disconnected to de-energise live parts prior to commencing work.
- Exposed live parts within the switchboard could have been isolated by way of insulating barriers or covers.
- Insulating mats could have been used to provide an electrically safe barrier on which the user could stand or kneel.
- The electrical worker did not wear insulating gloves where electrical hazards were present.

Recommendations

1. Where practicable, switchboards should be de-energised prior to work commencing inside the switchboard.
2. Where it is not practicable to de-energise live parts, risk assessments should be carried out and adequate controls implemented which could include:
 - a. The use of insulating barriers or covers over live parts;
 - b. The use of insulating mats; and
 - c. Wearing adequate personal protective equipment such as insulating gloves.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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