

Safety and health alert

28/95 Electric shocks in cleaning industry

Incident

A number of people in the cleaning industry have received electric shocks recently using electrical appliances such as vacuum cleaners, polishing machines and other electrical cleaning equipment.

1. A backpack vacuum cleaner with exposed wires could have caused an electric shock or electrocution, and prompted an electrical safety warning from the Office of Energy (WA). Live wires protruded through the outer covering of the vacuum cleaner's severely kinked and worn power cord.
2. A cleaner received an electric shock from a short circuit while plugging a polishing machine into a power outlet.
3. A cleaner was exposed to the risk of electric shock or electrocution from a vacuum cleaner with a damaged flexible cord that exposed live wires.

Factors

Recommendations

1. Never use flexible cords with severe kinks, exposed wires or damaged plugs.
2. Do not use PVC insulation tape to repair worn or damaged cords -- have the cord repaired by a licensed electrical worker or replaced.
3. Use only heavy duty flexible cords in the cleaning industry.
4. Supervise cleaners to ensure all electrical equipment is used properly at ALL times.
5. Ensure a system of regularly inspecting and testing electrical equipment according to AS3760 - 1990.
6. Ensure portable electrical cleaning appliances are protected by Residual Current Devices (RCDs).

Note: Flexible cords and plugs cause more electrical fatalities in Western Australia than any other single cause.

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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