Safety Matters

Talking Points for Supervisors

COLBURN GROUP

Avoid Electrical Shock

This is a short but shocking story about Cpt. Brown, who was 20-years old and home on a furlough from the service. He borrowed his brother's car to roam around for a few days and decided he should wash it before returning it to him. After washing the car, he noticed that the interior was dirty, so he borrowed his mother's vacuum cleaner. But he turned on the vacuum cleaner while standing on the wet driveway. Now, a soldier, who had made it through combat, was dead from a vacuum cleaner.

What caused this tragedy? First of all, never stand on wet or damp surfaces when using electric tools. And secondly, the vacuum cleaner that Cpt. Brown used was faulty and in need of repair. It never should have been used in the first place.

There are several precautions against accidental grounding that we all should observe when using portable electronic tools. Check your tools for these conditions:

- Defective or broken insulation,
- Improper or poorly made connections to terminals,
- Broken or otherwise defective plugs,
- Loose or broken switches, and
- Sparking brushes.

If any of these conditions exist, have the tool repaired before using it, report it to your supervisor, and do not use it.

A few other important safety rules include:

- Not attempting to repair or adjust portable electric tools while they are plugged in.
- Not using portable electric tools in the presence of flammable vapors or gases, unless designed for such use.

Electricity must be respected and used the same way you would a hunting rifle or an automobile—wisely.

Some people believe that low voltage shocks aren't harmful. Actually, low voltage jolts can be fatal. The severity of a shock is measured by three factors—the quantity of current flowing through the body; the path of the current as it passes through the body; and the duration of the current.

There are also three main factors that are involved in accidental grounding mishaps, and human error contributes to all of them.They include:

- Lack of knowledge of safety precautions,
- Ignoring hazards, and
- Neglect.

Portable electric tool safety is just one phase of a safety program, but it's an important one. Stay alert on the job, always check equipment prior to use, and do not take any unnecessary chances.

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