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Electrical Safety

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Supervising Safety Newsletter

National Electrical Safety is observed throughout the month of May across the United States. Contact with or exposure to electricity continues to be one of the leading causes of home and workplace fatalities and injuries in the United States. There are approximately 1000 deaths annually in the US because of electrical injuries.

- 20% of all electrical injuries occur in children.
- 80% of all electrical injuries occur in adults with occupational settings, which is the fourth-leading cause of workplace-related traumatic death.

Our main focus should be on reducing the number of injuries and death in adults outside of the home. If a workforce is properly trained to recognize the hazards found in the workplace, they will also take those lessons home and teach their children.

A study conducted from 2011 to 2022 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), found that there were 1,322 workplace fatalities involving electricity. When investigated, these fatalities could be divided into five main areas:

- 48% occurred by working near energized wires or equipment.
- 41% occurred when coming into contact with overhead power lines.
- 6% occurred when lockout/ tagout procedures were not followed or safety devices were removed.
- 3% resulted from PPE issues.
- 1% occurred from Arc-flash/ Blast incidents.

Workers should always be cautious and on the lookout when working on or near electricity. Practice situational awareness when engaged in a new assignment. Situational awareness means always being aware of the hazards around you. This requires workers to prepare in advance and be willing to stop work if an unsafe condition or situation is found. Some other ideas to help keep workers safe when working around electricity are:

- Avoid cutting corners to save time. When we cut corners, we bypass safety procedures which leads to more accidents.
- Follow lockout/ tagout procedures. This includes walking down the tag list to ensure all safety measures needed for the task have been taken.
- Never count on PPE for the first line of defense. PPE is often essential, but it is generally the **last line of defense**, after all other safety procedures and control methods have been followed.

Encourage one another to be mindful when working around electricity. These valuable safety skills learned on the job can also be applied at home and taught to our children. When we place emphasis on our personal safety and the safety of those around us, we develop and become a more cohesive workforce.

