PLAYING IT
SAFE

Arc Flash Safety and Prevention

A little-known fact is that electric shock causes only about 20 percent of all injuries among electrical workers; the majority are caused by burns or other effects of electrical arc explosions. Each year, 2,000 workers are admitted to burn centers for treatment of arc flash burns.

Arc Flash: The Basics

The best way to think of an arc flash is as a short circuit through the air. Arc flashes can not only scorch unprotected skin, but they could also cause traumatic hearing loss or trauma from flying electrical components. There are several things that can cause an arc flash, including:

- Inadvertently bridging electrical contacts with a conducting object
- Dropping a tool or otherwise causing a spark
- Coming near an extremely high-amp source with a conducting object, causing the electricity to arc
- Breaks or gaps in insulation
- The buildup of dust or corrosion
- Equipment failure because of either normal wear and tear or improper upkeep

Protect Yourself

- Perform all services to electrical equipment in a de-energized state. Use insulated tools when working on an energized or live circuit.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) that fully covers the eyes, face and any other area that could be exposed in the case of an arc flash.
- Arc flashes can cause hearing loss and serious or deadly burns not just to the person working on the electrical system, but also to workers more than 15 feet away from the blast.

To ensure further protection for yourself and your co-workers, talk to your supervisor about providing safe work practice program guidelines specifically for arc flash incidents.

Hot Topic

Next to the laser, the electric arc is the hottest event on earth.

Researchers have recorded arc flash temperatures of up to 35,000° F.

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