Electrical Safety

Electricity is energy we depend on for our lives and for work. When electrical systems are installed and maintained properly, they are controlled effectively. OSHA requires that employers provide training to both electrical workers and non-electrical workers who can be exposed to electrical hazards. The non-electrical worker has the largest exposure to electrical hazards in the workplace.

If your workplace has damaged cords, outlets, panels and conduit, workers may come to believe that they are expected to work with unsafe equipment. Ignoring unsafe work conditions or employee behavior is the same as giving approval. With constant reinforcement of safe work practices, electrical safety will become part of your company’s culture.

Employees should not take it upon themselves to address electric needs in the workplace. If a light fixture needs replacing, or a wire is exposed, or an equipment cord is frayed, the employee should inform a manager and have the appropriately trained technician or vendor address the issue.

Electrical safety instructions for any non-technician employee includes:

* Inspect electrical tools and equipment before use to make sure insulation and wiring are in good condition.
* If a piece of electrical equipment shocks, smokes, smells, or sparks, turn it off, tag it out, and report it to your supervisor. Don’t use it!
* Check plugs to make sure you have a good, tight connection.
* Outdoors or in wet areas use only cords that are approved for use under these conditions, and plug into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
* Don’t touch anything electrical with wet hands or while standing in a wet area.
* Don’t contact anything electrical with anything metal.
* Use only insulated, nonconductive tools around power sources.
* In areas with flammable liquids, vapors, or combustible dust, use only electrical cords and equipment identified as safe for that use.
* Make sure equipment doesn’t spark or get hot enough to ignite flammable or combustible materials in the area.
* Don’t overload outlets, circuits, or motors.
* Don’t let grease, dust, or dirt build up on electrical equipment.
* Keep electrical equipment well-lubricated to prevent overheating.
* Don’t reach blindly into a space that may contain energized parts.
* Use extension cords only if necessary and when rated high enough for the job.
* Don’t fasten electrical cords with staples, nails, or anything that could damage the insulation.

Electrocution is a leading cause of death in the workplace. More than half of those deaths are caused by two things—defective electrical equipment and failure to follow safe procedures. Accidents involving electricity can cause fires that can damage your facility and injure or kill employees. Because almost every job—even an office job—involves some contact with electricity, all employees should recognize electrical hazards and know how to prevent electrical accidents.