CompWest Loss Lessons: Electrical Accident

True Story

A contractor was hired to perform electrical renovation work at a large establishment. One of the employees at the job site was working as a journeyman electrician. While working on the ceiling, the employee accidentally contacted an energized part causing fatal injuries due to electrocution.

Lessons Learned

The following are some of the findings from the incident investigation:
- The circuit breaker was not locked out as required prior to working on the junction box.
- The company's lockout-tagout program did not include procedures specific to this task.
- Workers were not sufficiently trained on energy control procedures.
- There was no risk assessment for the specific task performed nor adequate supervision to ensure safety compliance.
- The remote location of this task led to reduced response and reaction time from other co-workers.

Prevention Tips

Consider the following to avoid electrical accidents:
- Regularly train all authorized and affected employees on proper energy control (lockout-tagout) practices.
- Conduct a formal risk assessment for the planned task – this helps identify the hazards of the specific task and adequate risk mitigation.
- Provide electrical safety equipment such as insulated tools, gloves, mats and ladders.
- Conduct pre-shift planning meetings at all job sites so crew members can observe and prevent unsafe acts or conditions.
- Ensure adequate supervision of crew members.
- Verify the power is indeed off using an electrical tester.
- Conduct routine safety inspections to identify and address employee safety violations quickly.

Additional Resources

- CompWest Resource Library: Lockout/Tagout Program
- Cal/OSHA Guide to Electrical Safety
- OSHA Lockout-Tagout eTool
- OSHA Publication 3075 - Electrical Hazards: Controlling Electrical Hazards

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. For further information, please contact your CompWest loss control consultant.

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