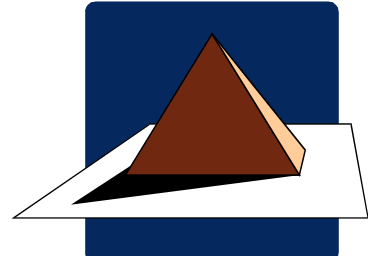


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“Service Measured To The Standard”

~ SAFETY AWARENESS: FALL PROTECTION ~

*“I don’t fool around with electrical.”
“It’s too dangerous. I don’t want to get
knocked down.” “I do most of my own work,
but not electrical.”*

These are very common phrases used by many home improvement do-it-yourselfers as well as most industrial mechanics. These people do not possess the experience, training, or knowledge of electrical safety, and realize that such tasks should be left to qualified electricians. Electrical hazards and safety concerns are many—some are obvious dangers and some are not as visible.

Do you know which hazard causes the most deaths for electrical workers? Would you guess high voltage electrocution? Falls? Low voltage electrocution? A quick look at each scenario reveals unexpected results.

Electricians working on high voltage sites take great care in securing proper lockout because of the obvious result of coming in contact with high voltage. But even a top quality electrician can overlook secondary hazards while focusing on the more obvious, primary electrical hazards.

“It’s only 120 volts. It can’t hurt you.”

This is another common phrase, but it can be deadly. Whether an electrician or not, over 400 people die every year by contact with household voltage – low voltage electrocution.

However, the answer to our question is:

most fatalities of electrical workers are not due to electrical contact, but rather are the result of falls!

These fatalities are partly due to concentrating intensely on the electrical hazards. Consequently, the access device is not given the proper consideration that is required to make the job completely safe. Electrical workers have extensive training in electrical safety, but how knowledgeable are they about Personal Fall Arrest Protection equipment?

Perhaps one of the most common pieces of equipment used at home or at work is a ladder. How much time does the average person take to analyze potential hazards concerning a ladder before using it? The common-sense approach would indicate that the ladder should be inspected for problems or defects prior to use. A ladder with *any* structural defect should be discarded immediately: do not attempt to make repairs. Never paint a ladder; the paint may cover defects.

The position of the ladder is equally important. The ladder should be situated so that the work is directly in front of you: never reach to the side while working on a ladder. If the job requires extending your reach, the ladder should be re-positioned to avoid, or minimize reaching to the side. *“Come on! Who does that? I can reach it.” “It’s only going to*

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take a minute to finish.” “It’ll take longer to move the ladder than to get the job done.”

These are excuses and evidence of shortcuts that contribute to injuries due to improper work practices involving ladders.

Additional precautions in anticipation of associated potential hazards are required when using extension ladders. The possibility of the ladder sliding out of position is a very realistic hazard and necessitates the need for tying off the ladder to prevent its slipping or sliding. Remember: always have someone hold the ladder while it is being tied off and be certain that the feet are in good condition and properly seated.

When using an extension ladder, your weight should be centered. A weight imbalance is magnified the higher you climb. Obviously, reaching to the side of an extension ladder from 15 feet up is much more dangerous than from 4 feet up. Common sense must be used regarding your specific situation.

Scaffolds are another common work platform for electrical workers, and the rules for its use are very strict. Correctly built, they provide safe access to the job. Never yield to the temptation to incorporate convenience into the erection of a scaffold and do not attempt to modify it once it is erected. An important reminder: the position of a scaffold should never be in close proximity (10 feet) to live electrical lines without de-energizing or insulating the lines.

Access to or from scaffolds should never be via transformers, motor control centers, or live

switchgear, even though the equipment may be enclosed in a cabinet. The cabinet’s sturdiness is the undetermined factor. Stepping onto a live cabinet only to have the plate give way has resulted in fatalities.

Working from the basket of a man lift presents its own array of potential hazards. The controls, positioning, proximity of live electrical lines, and, more importantly, the use of fall protection, should be taken into consideration. Knowing where to tie off, what to do if the lift malfunctions, and whether its range of travel presents a hazard are necessary aspects to consider for safety precautions.

Your personal safety practice *is* the key to fall protection when working from various elevations using various work access devices. Understanding the difference between the terms “fall protection”, “restraint”, and “job access” is a must. Becoming knowledgeable and familiar with the use of specific safety belts, harnesses, or lanyards is of the utmost importance.

Remember, the devices mentioned here are for job access and restraint only. They are not primarily designed to prevent falls. Your ability to recognize potential fall hazards and to ensure job safety is what really prevents fall-related injuries. If you do not have the time to verify a safety procedure, inquire. Learning to perform a task properly reduces the jeopardy that accompanies risk-taking.

We at Cornerstone feel very strongly about safety. No job is so important that the few extra minutes to evaluate and address any safety issue cannot be taken.

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