



October MOL blitz: electrical safety

Ministry of Labour inspectors are conducting a blitz on electrical safety throughout October.

The last blitz on electrical safety was July 2008. During that month-long effort, inspectors issued 279 orders regarding electrical hazards. Fifty of the 279 orders related to working too close to overhead powerlines. Thirty-one orders related to working on energized electrical equipment.

This month, when inspectors come to your site, these are some things they will expect to see.

- Vehicles and other equipment must be kept a safe distance from energized overhead powerlines.



- Before excavating, you must get adequate locates and mark the underground electrical conductors and other utilities.
- The constructor and employers must have a lockout and tag procedure. All workers who are doing electrical work must implement the procedure.
- There should be no work on or near exposed energized electrical conductors, installations, or equipment except in the specific circumstances prescribed in the Construction Regulation (section 191).

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Dust: How bad can it be?

We know dust isn't necessarily good for us, but some may not realize how harmful it can actually be.

Some of the common dusts you encounter in construction are wood dust, soil dust, drywall dust, metal dusts (e.g., lead), silica dust, and asbestos dust. Inhaling any type of dust over a long period can affect your health, but some types of dust are much more harmful than others. When you are determining how harmful a dust is, you need to consider four factors.

- 1) **Type.** The type of material the dust is coming from is a significant factor when determining potential health effects. For example, wood dust may irritate your inner nose and respiratory tract, but asbestos dust could lead to cancer (especially if you smoke), and lead dust could result in central nervous system disorders.

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Dust: How bad can it be?

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- 2) **Amount inhaled.** The most common way that dust enters our bodies is inhalation—we breathe it in. The more dust that enters your body, the more harm it can do to you.
- 3) **Size.** In general, the smaller the dust particle, the more it can hurt you. This is because smaller particles can penetrate deep into the lungs. The deeper into your lungs they go, the more chance there is of a disease developing.
- 4) **Persistence.** Some types of dust are more easily expelled from your body than others. For example, asbestos dust remains in your lungs for a very long time. The longer dust stays in your lungs, the more damage it can do.

All construction workers are exposed to various types of dust while working. If the work you are doing isn't creating dust, then chances are someone else on the site is doing something that is. Once dust gets in the air, everyone in the work area could breathe it in.

Asbestos and silica

Two of the most dangerous types of dust are asbestos and silica. Asbestos dust is created when you are working around asbestos, which can still be found in many old buildings. Inhaling asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer, mesothelioma (cancer of the chest lining), and asbestosis (scar tissue hardening the lungs).

Silica is found in concrete, mortar, drywall, grout, marble, and stone. Cutting, grinding, or sanding these materials creates silica dust. Inhaling silica dust can cause silicosis and may also lead to lung cancer. Similar to asbestosis, silicosis causes the lungs to harden, making it difficult to breathe.

When working with asbestos, follow the requirements in Ontario Regulation 278/05, *Regulation Respecting Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations*. When working with silica, follow the *Silica on Construction Projects* guideline.

You can download both of these documents from the Legislation section of www.csao.org.

Prevention

As a constructor or employer, you are responsible for taking every reasonable precaution to protect your workers. In addition to following the regulation and guideline mentioned above, here are some things you can do to protect your workers from any kind of dust exposure.

- Review the material safety data sheets for the products you are using (e.g., grout, mortar, or drywall compound) to see if they contain hazardous materials such as silica. If they do, look for substitutes that don't have it.
- Use a local exhaust ventilation system, such as a vacuum-equipped saw or grinder. The dust is sucked into the vacuum as you work, preventing it from getting into the air around you.



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You can reproduce the contents freely for wider distribution, but please credit *NetworkNews*.

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- Use tools that apply water to suppress dust, such as a saw that keeps the blade wet. Water keeps the dust down and out of the air.
- Have your workers wet sweep instead of dry sweep where possible. Spray the ground with water before sweeping.
- When you are organizing work for the day, consider wind direction. Try to avoid having dust blow through a work area.

- Remind your workers not to eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum in dusty areas.

When you are not able to eliminate or control dust on your jobsite, equip your workers with appropriate respirators and train them on respirator use and maintenance. Check the respirator chart in the winter 2007/2008 edition of *Construction Safety* magazine or in the *Construction Health and Safety Manual*. You can download both from www.csa.org.

First CLRC working group underway

The Construction Legislative Review Committee (CLRC) has assembled its first working group since its inception in 2007. The group, which has been tasked with amending tower-crane safety legislation, had its first meeting on September 23rd.

The Ministry of Labour initiated a review of tower-crane safety legislation last summer. Proposed amendments were sent out to the labour-management network for comment back in November 2008.

The Ministry of Labour and the Provincial Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee both support the proposed changes. Now, the job of the working group is to complete a detailed review of the regulations that govern tower cranes in the province and draft new wording for the sections that will change.

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- Only qualified workers can carry out work on electrical systems, installations, or conductors as outlined in the Construction Regulation.

To prepare for this blitz, visit the Electrical Safety page on www.csa.org. You will find safety talks on topics such as overhead powerlines and lockout and tagging, posters reminding workers about common electrical hazards, a chapter from the *Construction Health and Safety Manual* on electrical safety, and much more.

LISTEN UP!

Noise feature in *Construction Safety*



Noise-induced hearing loss is a growing problem among construction workers. Once your hearing is lost, you can never get it back.

The autumn edition of *Construction Safety* magazine has information you need to protect yourself and your workers. You'll learn when noise becomes a hazard and

the most effective ways to control it. You'll also find a centerfold chart outlining the noise levels of common construction equipment.

Check your mailbox next month for your copy or go to www.csa.org to download it for free.

Signallers save lives

When a dump truck or excavator backs over or hits a worker, the injuries are almost always critical—if not fatal. Last year, three workers died after being run over by heavy equipment. So far this year, three more have been killed the same way.

Due to blind spots, which all vehicles and heavy equipment have, the possibility of a worker getting hit is always there. The most effective way to prevent this from happening is to use signallers.

It's not only the other workers on a jobsite that need protection. Drivers and operators often get out of the cab to talk to a supervisor or to check their load. These drivers could easily end up in the blind spot of another vehicle leaving or entering the area.

When you assign a worker to be a signaller, you significantly lower the risk of someone getting run over. The signaller makes sure the driver's intended path is clear, communicating this to the driver and warning of any concerns down the way.

If you haven't already, train some of your workers to be signallers. Then, make use of them on your site. If you don't, you could be gambling with your workers' lives.



Improving the value of inquests

Dr. Bonita Porter, Deputy Chief Coroner for Ontario, attended the September meeting of the Provincial Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee to discuss how we can improve the value of mandatory inquests into deaths on construction sites. The proposed solution is to create a Construction Fatality Review Committee.

After hearing all the evidence presented during an inquest, a jury produces a set of recommendations that should prevent the same set of circumstances from arising again and harming another worker. One of the problems is that it can take up to five years for the industry to get these recommendations.

Establishing a Construction Fatality Review Committee would help to get the information to the industry more quickly, rather than waiting for the inquest to be completed and the jury to make their formal recommendations. The review committee would also provide the coroner's office with expert knowledge about various aspects of the construction industry, ensuring that the jury is well informed.

The Provincial committee has approved a draft Terms of Reference for a Construction Fatality Review Committee. If endorsed by the Chief Coroner's office, the new committee could be up and running early next year.