

A Long-Standing Commitment to Safety Training

By: Construction Safety Council

It was 50 years ago that a federal law was enacted creating the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and requiring all employers to provide safety training to employees. Today, this instruction is more important than ever and cannot be dismissed as inconvenient or unaffordable. Too many lives – and livelihoods – are at stake.

More than 120 years ago, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) was established to eliminate death, injury, and economic loss due to electrical hazards. The NFPA 70E Standard is still the industry model for promoting safety in the workplace. It details the training that employers should provide to minimize the frequency of electrocutions, arc blasts, and other electrical risks. These all-too-common incidents are preventable with a strong commitment to awareness and instruction by employers and employees.

Contractors must evaluate the levels of risk on jobsites and develop training programs that focus on the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions. Similarly, workers must actively participate in training and become proficient in identifying and avoiding workplace hazards. Together, they should work in concert to develop policies and procedures for tools, protective equipment, precautions, and decision-making that will promote job safety.

So, how does an employer get started? The first step in establishing an electrical safety training program is to become familiar with OSHA requirement 29 CFR 1926.21 – Safety Training and Education: (1) The employer should avail himself of the safety and health training programs the Secretary (OSHA) provides; and (2) The employer shall instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury.

Compliance with the first part of this regulation can be accomplished by attending the training courses offered by the national network of OSHA Training Institute (OTI) Education Centers. Specifically, OSHA #3095 – Electrical Standards is a four-day course that covers topics such as single- and three-phase systems, cord- and plug-connected equipment, grounding, ground fault circuit interrupters, and safety-related work practices.

This course is a prerequisite for obtaining the Public Sector Safety & Health Fundamentals Certificate, which is a credential recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor and available to private sector employees, as well. For more information, contact the National Safety Education Center, which is the only OSHA-authorized training facility in Illinois. The NSEC is a partnership between Northern Illinois University and the Construction Safety Council and can be accessed at www.nsec.niu.edu or at 815-753-6902.

NFPA also offers training and certification programs to recognize employer and employee commitment to professional development. Visit www.NFPA.org to obtain these credentials:

- **Certified Electrical Safety Worker (CESW)**
- **Certified Electrical Safety Technician (CEST)**
- **Certified Electrical Safety Compliance Professional (CESCP)**

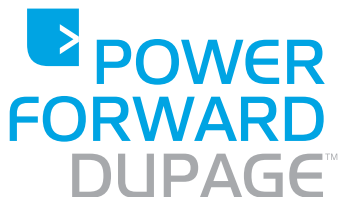
The second step towards following OSHA regulation 29 CFR 1926.21 is to train employees on the recognition and avoidance of specific workplace conditions and the regulations that apply to their work environment. This type of training is most effective when it occurs at the workplace using real-life examples and actual equipment presenting unique hazards.

The golden rule of operating safely around electricity is for all equipment to be placed in an “electrical-safe work condition.” This requires a proactive Lock-out/Tag-out Program that all employees must follow. With very few exceptions, all power must be shut-off so that the work environment is not energized and, therefore, safe for the performance of essential tasks. Documentation of this training is also required by the OSHA standard.

Employers must also adhere to aggressive preventative maintenance programs and enforce guidelines related to the selection, use, and care of personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes proper labeling of voltage, arc flash boundaries, and approach distances. All are necessary to providing a safe and healthful environment that accounts for the dangers that are inherent in electrical work.

PowerForward DuPage, in partnership with the Construction Safety Council, encourages a New Year’s Resolution to **Work Smart, Build Safe!** A host of training resources are available, but they demand attention and cooperation from employers and employees. Continuation of this decades-long commitment to safety will keep the electrical industry productive and profitable for many years to come.

A complete schedule of electrical safety training programs is available at www.buildsafe.org



28600 Bella Vista Parkway,
Suite 2006, Warrenville, IL 60555
Phone > 630.791.2660 Fax > 630.393.3497
Web > www.PowerForwardDuPage.com



The Construction Safety Council, in partnership with the NECA-IBEW 701 Safety Committee, would like to remind you to Work Smart, Build Safe!



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