

Electric Shock

To start with, I'm going to tell you a story about corporal brown. It's a short story with a sudden ending.

Corporal brown was 20 years old and home on a furlough after serving in Vietnam. He borrowed his brother's car to roam around in for a few days and then decided he should wash it. After washing the car in the driveway, corporal brown noticed that the interior was rather dirty, so he borrowed his mother's vacuum cleaner to sweep it out.

Unfortunately for corporal brown, when he turned on the vacuum cleaner while standing on the wet driveway, the instant death that he had escaped in combat suddenly struck him down.

This is a true story. Only the name, now on a tombstone, has been changed.

What caused the tragedy? Two rules for the safe use of electric tools and appliances were violated. They were violated unintentionally, of course, but that's the way most tragic accidents occur.

First of all, never stand on wet or damp surfaces when using electric tools. Secondly, the vacuum sweeper that corporal brown used apparently was faulty and in need of repair. It never should have been used.

There are several precautions against accident grounding that we all should observe when using portable electric tools. Check your tools for these conditions:

- * Defective or broken insulation.
- * Improper or poorly made connections to terminals.
- * Broken or otherwise defective plugs.
- * Loose or broken switches.
- * Sparking brushes.

If any of these conditions exist, have the tool repaired before using it, or report it to me. But don't use the defective tool. A couple of other safety rules are important, too. Do not attempt to repair or adjust portable electric tools while they're plugged in. Don't use

portable electric tools in the presence of flammable vapors or gases, unless designed for such use.

There's a lot about electricity that's misunderstood and seems to be mysterious. I'm not going to even attempt to cover all of these points. Let me just say that electricity has become an integral part of our lives. It's a valuable friend, but it must be respected and used wisely, the same as a hunting rifle or an automobile.

Some people believe that low-voltage shocks can't harm them. Actually, these low-voltage jolts can be fatal. The severity of a shock is measured by three factors: the quantity of current flowing through the body; the path of the current as it passes through the body; and the duration of the current.

If faulty tools can be responsible for an accidental grounding, then naturally, tools should receive proper care. They should always be returned to their proper place and should be handled with care.

To reduce the hazard of electric shock, third-wire grounding or approved double-insulated tools are used. The extension cords you use should have three-pronged plugs. These approved accessories should be used at home as well as at work.

There are three factors involved in accidental grounding mishaps that should be recognized. All of these factors involve people. They are: lack of knowledge of safety precautions, ignoring hazards and neglect.

Again, I will call to your attention that it's important to check your tools before using them. If they appear to be broken, defective, or in poor condition, report it to me. Don't use the tool until it has been approved for further use.

You are all valuable employees or you wouldn't be here. It's important that we keep you on the job--important to you, to your families, and to the company. Portable electric tool safety is just one phase of our overall safety program, but it's an important one.

I urge you to stay alert on the job and not to take unnecessary chances.