

FIVE-MINUTE SAFETY TALK

Electric Shock

I'm going to tell you a story about Corporal Brown. It's a short story with a shocking ending.

Cpl. Brown was 20 years old and home on a furlough after service in Viet Nam. He borrowed his brother's car to roam around for a few days and decided he should wash it. After washing the car, Cpl. Brown noticed that the interior was rather dirty, so he borrowed his mother's vacuum to clean it.

Cpl. Brown turned the vacuum cleaner on while standing on the wet driveway. Cpl. Brown, who had gone through combat, was dead.

This is a true story, and it happened in Michigan. 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 most tragic accidents are never intentional.

First of all, never stand on wet or damp surfaces when using electric tools. Secondly, the vacuum cleaner which Cpl. Brown used was apparently faulty and in need of repair. It never should have been used.

There are several precautions against accidental 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. 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 they are specifically 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 intricate 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.

Faulty tools can be responsible for an accident. Tools should receive proper care so they will not become faulty. They should always be returned to their proper place, should be handled with care, and should be inspected regularly.

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

There are three factors involved in accidental grounding mishaps which should be recognized. All of these factors are contributed by people. They are a lack of knowledge of safety precautions, ignoring hazards, and neglect.

Again, 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 do not take unnecessary chances.