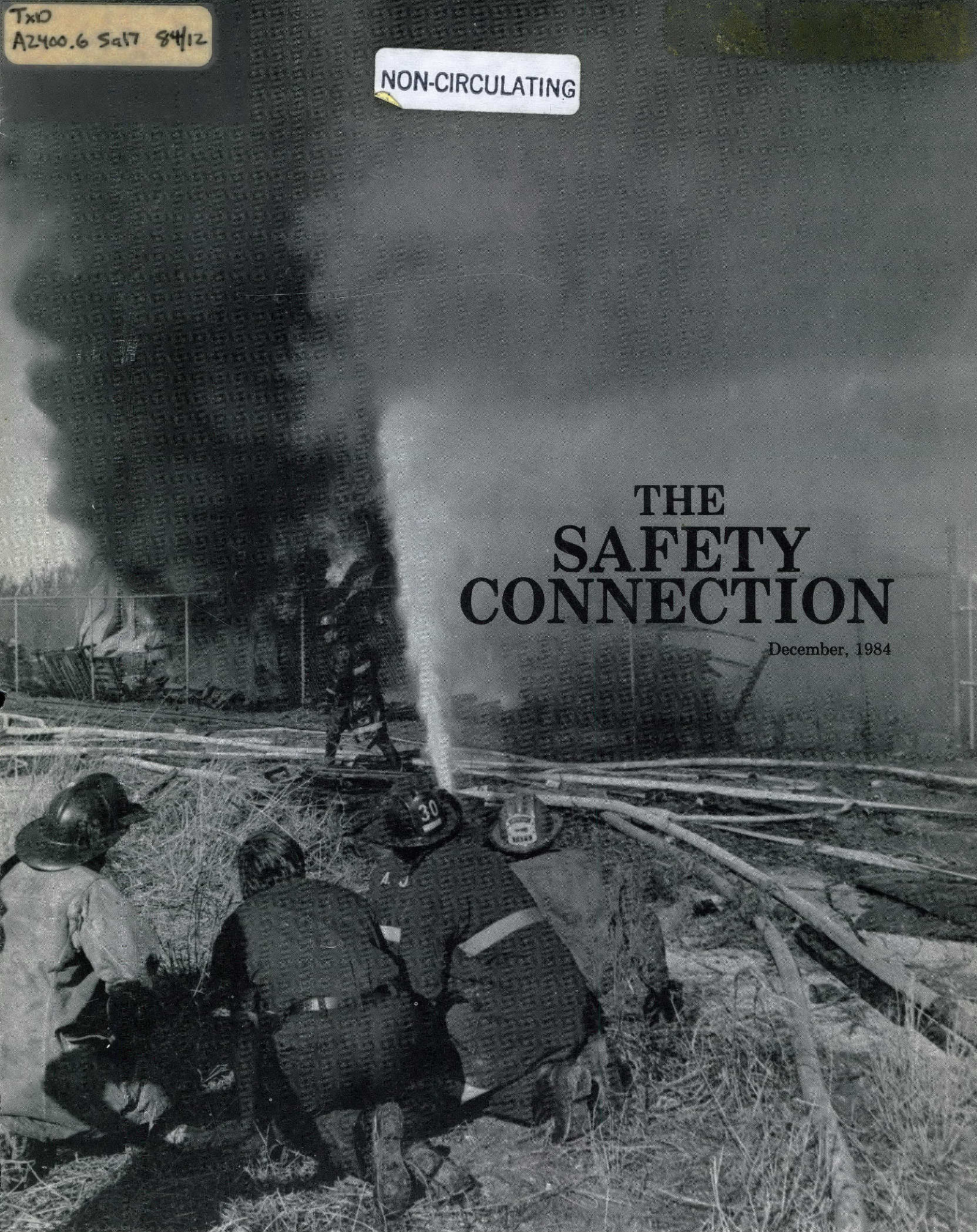


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# THE SAFETY CONNECTION

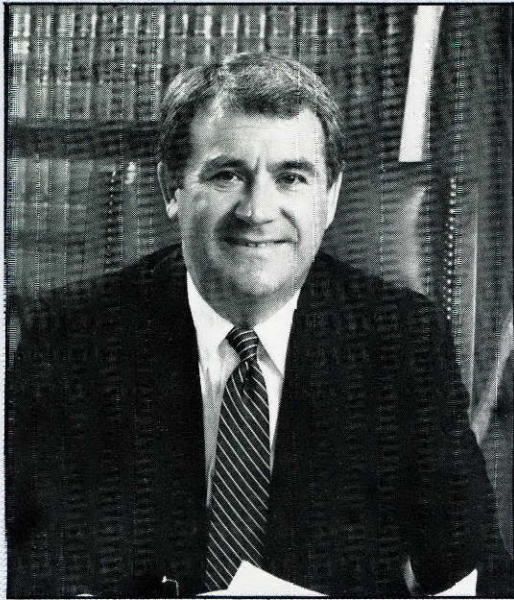
December, 1984

A PUBLICATION OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S WORKERS COMPENSATION DIVISION

**JIM MATTOX**  
Attorney General



85-93 FEB 16 1985



**Jim Mattox**  
**Texas Attorney General**

Dear Friend,

Sometimes we forget about one of our most important jobs in government: the job of keeping hundreds of thousands of employees safe from the many accidents which could happen in the various work environments of state agencies.

Each of us must have the dedication and initiative necessary to meet this objective.

This new newsletter from my Workers Compensation Division is meant to help you, keep you informed about the activities of this and other agencies, and give you a forum in which to offer your ideas on health and safety.

Please tell your newsletter editor, Fred Ford, what you would like to see in this quarterly newsletter. The Attorney General's Office is the people's law firm. We are here to help you.

Sincerely,

Jim Mattox  
Attorney General of Texas

# THE SAFETY CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S WORKERS COMPENSATION DIVISION

Editor: Fred Ford

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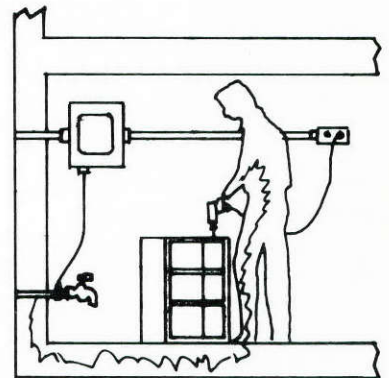
## HOW MANAGERS IMPROVE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS

A noted safety expert says government managers are not fulfilling their responsibilities for safety, with possible serious consequences.

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## DANGER ELECTRICITY

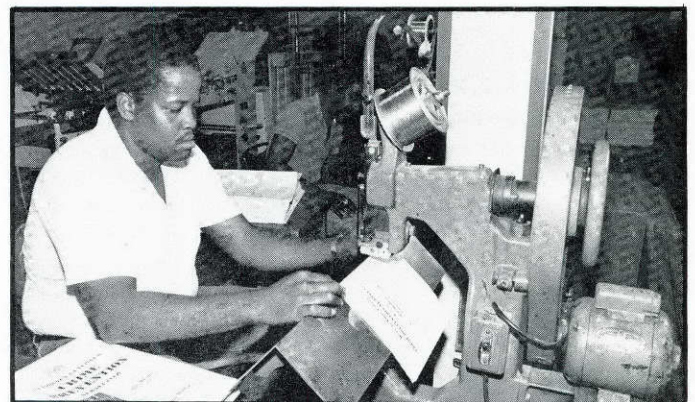
Three electrical safety tips employees can use at work or at home: Electrical Fires, GFCI, and House Current Can Kill.

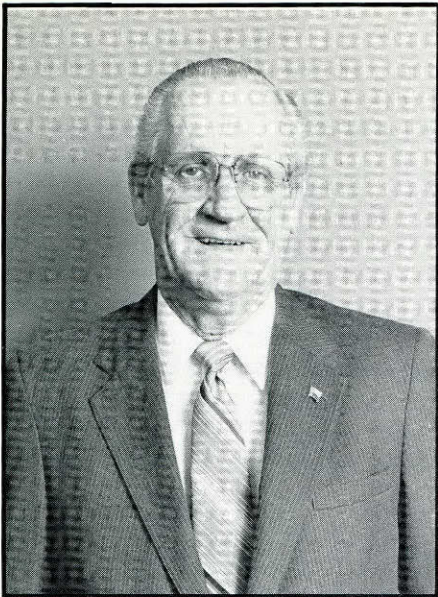


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## PROTECT THOSE EMPLOYEES

Accident prevention training can pay big dividends, if you know what to tell employees.





TOM DAVIS  
Workers Compensation Division

Management is the key for the success of any safety program. Since management sets the tone for both supervisory personnel and general employees, if management is not genuinely interested in preventing accidents and injuries, no one else is likely to be either.

Management's interest, therefore, should be vocal, visible, and continuous. Support of the Safety Program can be shown by attendance at safety meetings, signing safety announcements, and talking about accident prevention with employees. Management can express interest through award presentations, letter of commendation, and frequent publicization of safety tips.

Management's involvement will be perceived as expressing management's real feelings about the importance of safety in the workplace.

Are you actively supporting your safety program? There are times to let things happen, and times to cause things to happen. Please join us in causing things to happen in the name of safety.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis

CUT HERE

**YOU BE THE EDITOR!**

Dear Reader,

We are trying to improve the Safety Connection Newsletter for you. Please answer the following survey questions and return this form to us so we may offer you more of the information you want. Thanks for your help.

1. I read the Newsletter. \_\_\_ Yes; \_\_\_ No
2. The information is \_\_\_ too long; \_\_\_ too short; \_\_\_ about right
3. I like the broad spectrum of information presented. \_\_\_ Yes; \_\_\_ No
4. I would prefer a Newsletter dealing with stories only in my special area. \_\_\_ Yes; \_\_\_ No.  
Area: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I would like future Newsletters to include:  
 \_\_\_ articles (list suggested topics below); \_\_\_ pertinent news about the A.G.'s office;  
 \_\_\_ interviews; \_\_\_ a list of A.G. publications; \_\_\_ pictures;  
 \_\_\_ suggestions for future legislation in your area: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Other Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Send to: Fred Ford, Workers Compensation Division, Attorney General's Office  
P.O. Box 13777, Austin, Texas 78711

# HOW MANAGERS IMPROVE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS

## IDEAS THAT WILL PAY OFF

from  
"Are Government Executives  
Managing Safety?" by  
Mr. William Gutos  
Safety Mgr.  
Dept. of Natural Resources  
State of Michigan

The odds are that government executives aren't managing safety in the same manner that other management programs are being executed. Many, possibly most, of the city, county, state and federal chief executive officers (CEO) are unaware of their employee lost-time accidents. Even on an annual or quarterly basis, they are probably not aware of their causes and cost trends.

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**Successful CEOs in the private sector look at defects in the safety system as being faults of management, since management controls the climate of worklife.**

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When asked about their safety program, they are, of course, absolutely for it; and they try to see that someone is coordinating or covering safety matters. In many situations, the so-called safety coordinators will grieve about "no linkage into the head shed," but at the same time, they will defend their CEO with

arguments that he or she is too busy to become involved in their acknowledge responsibilities for employee safety and health. The effect is that many employees think the CEO regards workplace safety of low priority and not worth their time and personal commitment.

While OSHA is enforcement oriented, their national policy clearly states that it is the responsibility of management to ensure a safe and healthful workplace. Others report that government continues to "lag behind" in their own employee safety and health programs (not setting the right example for the private sector). **Let's never forget that line management is accountable for safety, and the courts do distinguish between the responsible and negligent manager or employee.** There's no sense expounding the value of records just to say that records make programs work.

### **Government Management**

But why is government management different from the private sector?

**1. Management is not accountable for costs.** There are general funds established to pay for government employee injuries and accidents. It doesn't come out of the current operating budget. A city mayor-manager or state department head isn't affected whether there are one or

1,000 broken backs, because he isn't charged for compensation. In business, the entrepreneur is acutely aware, for it affects the cost of doing business and profits. To improve this situation, I know of one state that has transferred accountability from the general fund to each department to pay for its workers' compensation losses. It should be further delegated that each division manager within a department be cost-accountable for the department's accidents. In our free society, it appears to be a hard economic fact that management accountability must be directly related to dollars if it is to be effective at all. The current recession has made everyone money-conscious, particularly government, and this ought to make government focus on preventing the drain of dollars that could lead to lost wages, salaries and even jobs.

### **2. Government had immunity.**

In the past, government employees and management were protected from legal liability in almost everything. In the past few years the trend has reversed. Throughout the land, courts have fined local and state governments for mismanagement or negligence. Some top government managers may hope they are personally immune, thinking that only their middle managers or first-line supervisors will be required to appear in court, but taxpayers are insisting more than ever that government must also be managed effectively and that officials be held personally accountable.

There is no assurance that a wife, child or parent will not seek legal recourse because the law states that an employee may not sue his employer. If the trend continues, soon the immunity vests will be a thing of the past. Managers everywhere will be trying to do the right things at the right time, and this will result in fewer errors and more money available to improve productivity, services and personal pleasures.

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## **There is no excuse for lackadaisical management, particularly relative to safety and health issues.**

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### **A Simple Solution**

This problem can be solved rather easily. Government executives can start demonstrating their personal commitment through effective organization and specific actions. The annual performance of the organization's line manager should include at least an assessment of their accident rates and worker's compensation cost trends. Employees and taxpayers alike want the feeling and confidence that the CEO's safety program objectives are to prevent human suffering and keep operating costs all at the lowest possible level. Is safety given lip service or is it a real management priority?

● Safety ought to be managed like any other management problem or program. **It is necessary to hold people accountable for their performance.** The policy or program will succeed if it motivates supervisor performance and accountability, compels active involvement and accountability of middle and top management, and allows worker participation. The errors of employees should be respected or

regarded as the errors of management.

● Government executives can select a qualified person as safety manager to be the CEO's staff advisor and to work with the line managers in achieving their divisional safety objectives. Larger units of government will need a full-time Certified Safety Professional. Smaller units may be able to afford only to appoint someone on an additional duty basis. Fortunately, education and training in safety management, engineering and technical skills, hazard awareness and control, and behavior system are available at acceptable cost and distance.

● Many cities have a person who monitors employee safety in the wastewater treatment plant or fire and police departments, but no one for other department or office employees. In small municipalities, perhaps these persons' responsibilities could be expanded and regarded as the municipal employee safety coordinator. In larger units of government, even with a full-time safety manager, it will be necessary to have safety coordinators in critical operations such as fire, police, parks, refuse, wastewater and toxic materials control.

● **The Japanese quality circle concept may be very effective in special or critical operations such as fire or parks.** Some safety groups like to call quality circles, safety circles. By any name, they are small groups of employees who do similar work and who meet regularly on a voluntary basis to discuss safety problems, analyze them and provide solutions. They report to the same supervisor or are in the same line chain of command.

● Don't be shocked if you discover that management is part of the problem. **Dr. Demming, who is credited with establishing quality circle programs throughout Japan, found that 85% of all quality problems are management problems, and that**

**only 15% are employee problems.** The same concept applies to safety. Management is accountable for most of the accidents or errors that occur. Poor safety is a management problem. The person wearing the staff safety cap will report to the head shed in the executive offices (CEO). Management commitment is absolutely essential.

● Support the long-range objective and avowed need recently announced by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the National Safety Management Society (NSMS) and other agencies to have all colleges of business management include an identifiable study of safety administration in their educational programs. The national program is called "Project Minerva." It is important to educate all students, particularly management students, in the field of safety-systems management so that future leaders will recognize safety as an integral function of an operation requiring top management support.

Government leaders (CEOs) must set the example. Employee safety and health are not their only worthwhile management objectives. They are also expected to be responsive to President Reagan's recent call for public-private partnership to enhance the aims of business and to meet the social gains at the same time. While I applaud government executives who have implemented viable safety programs, I hope others who read or hear about this message will be motivated to take a second look to improve the future. The sky-rocketing costs of accidents, operational errors and human suffering is manageable. A personal commitment by the CEO will make it click.

Why not forward a copy of this article to your chief executive officer?

# DANGER

# ELECTRICITY

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## What You Don't Know Can Kill You

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### Electrical Fires

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When an electrical fire is discovered, first try to cut off the electricity by unplugging or pulling the main switch. If you are certain the current is off, it's safe to use a Class A or B fire extinguisher depending on the type of fire.

However, never use water or the incorrect class extinguisher if electricity is still present. You could get a fatal shock. An energized electrical fire requires the use of a dry chemical or carbon dioxide extinguisher ("B/C" or "A/B/C").

Fires in or near a source of electricity are classified as Class C fires. The material that is burning will be Class A or B by nature.

Class A is ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber or many plastics (insulation on wire is a specific example). Class B is flammable li-

quids, gases or grease (oil on the floor that is ignited by a sparking electric motor would be so classified).

Quick and knowledgeable action by the first employee on the scene can be the difference between a mishap and a catastrophe.

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### Meet A GFCI

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#### What's a GFCI?

It's a Ground Fault Circuit Interruptor.

#### What does it do?

It constantly monitors the flow of electric current.

#### How Does it Work?

As long as the amount of current returning from an appliance is equal to the amount that went in, the GFCI does nothing. But if less current comes back than went in the GFCI cuts off the flow of electricity.

#### Why?

Because if all the current doesn't come back, then some of it is following a different path and is creating a hazard. Thus when a GFCI cuts the power, the duration of a shock is limited. So even with a GFCI you still get a minor shock, but because a GFCI works so fast, it's over before serious injury can occur.

GFCIs are now considered so necessary that the National Electrical Code requires their use in new residences to protect receptacle outlets that are outdoors and in bathrooms, garages and other high-risk areas. The Code also recommends them for use in workshops, laundries and kitchens. They are also a good idea if you are using portable electrical equipment in a damp area.

GFCIs are small enough to replace the circuit breaker box or be inserted into a household outlet. There are three different types for the home: *receptacle, circuit breaker and portable.*

Because conditions, needs and local regulations vary, it is wise to consult a qualified electrician about the kind of GFCI protection that's best for your needs.

# How House Current Kills

Many people think fuses and circuit breakers are all the electrical protection that is necessary in the home. They are quick to relate cases where household voltage did nothing more than produce an unpleasant muscle reflex. But a closer look at a hypothetical home situation will show how a little voltage can be dangerous.

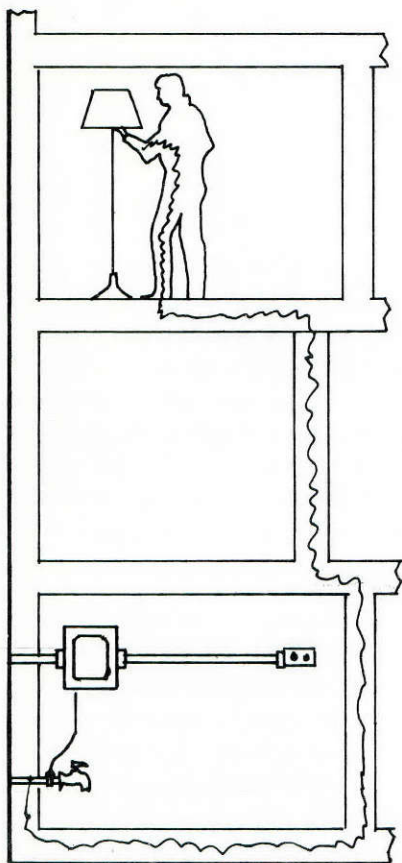


Figure 1

In Figure 1 a man on the second floor of his home turns on a faulty lamp. There's a little current "leakage," so the man might experience a mild shock.

The shock path goes through his body, through the carpeting, flooring, wooden beams and all the way down to the basement where the electrical service is bonded to the water pipes.

When the man touches the metal lamp, he completes a circuit and current flows. But in this case the circuit is such a long one, and there is so much

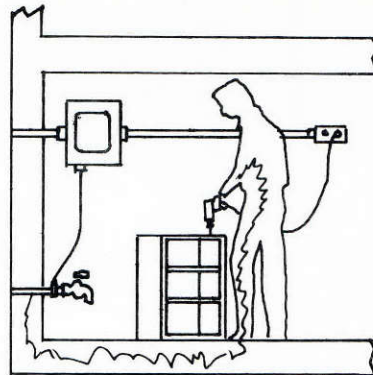


Figure 2

resistance to the flow of current through poor conductors such as wood that the man experiences only a tingling sensation.

Now let's take the same man and put him down in the basement on damp concrete (Figure 2). However, he has neglected to use an adapter that could be grounded to the outlet when he plugged in the old drill.

Again there is current leakage, but this time the path through his body to ground is very short, the damp concrete floor offers little resistance, and much more current can flow. Instead of a tingling sensation, the same voltage produces a tragic accident.

## SAFETY...

### The Effective Safety Supervisor

Here are a few suggestions to help supervisors become more effective,

- 1. Analyze jobs from a safety viewpoint —** Know each job in your department so that you are able to spot potential hazards. If a different job method will eliminate a hazard, use it. Explain why, from a safety viewpoint, certain job policies/practices must be followed.
- 2. Street safety training —** Emphasize safety during job training. Explain rules and regulations thoroughly. Rules are less likely to be broken or ignored when employees understand them and why they are established.
- 3. Be a hazard detector —** Continually look, identify and eliminate hazards because conditions are always changing. If you relax and take things for granted, a hazard may develop where you least expect it. Train your employees to be safety conscious so they can help identify and eliminate danger spots.
- 4. Communicate often —** Talk with your employees about safety. When you do, make it a two-way conversation. Don't preach or lecture. Few people like to be told dogmatically what they should or should not do.
- 5. Be a credit giver —** Most employees want approval and recognition. When they follow safe work practices, let them know you are pleased. If they have ideas that will improve your department's safety performance, listen to them. If an idea is practical, put it into effect and make certain the employee gets the credit.



# ONLY WHEN I LAUGH

## Dairy Dangers

In Levittown, Pa., a hazardous materials team was rushed in. Ten workers and firefighters were sent to the hospital complaining of symptoms ranging from nausea to itching. Traffic was diverted from two main roads. Authorities feared the worst. Then the material leaking from a tractor-trailer was identified: buttermilk. "The flavoring was concentrated, and, to be honest, it stunk," said Bill Gratton, truck terminal manager. All those overcome by the odor were soon back on the job.

## Making up by breaking up

A Monmouth Illinois, couple settl-

ed their differences with their own private demolition derby and were charged with reckless driving. After quarreling, Betty L. Sargent and her husband Don hopped in their cars and rammed their points home. No one knows what started it, but the net result was \$500 in damages to Don's car and about \$1,000 to Betty's. And a lot of headaches for both.

## Bird-brained smoke detector

A couple escaped unharmed from an apartment fire in Knoxville, Ill., thanks to their green, feathered, squawking smoke detector. Carlos, a macaw, hopped from his perch to Joe and Tammy Ores' bed in the

smoke-filled apartment. "He got on them and raised a fuss and got them up," said Fire Chief Joe Burgess. The couple fled, but without Carlos. A firefighter entered the building with an air tank and brought Carlos to safety—still squawking.

## Everywhere an oink, oink

Jan Cermal, a Scottish researcher, has found that the noise of pigs munching on their dinner often exceeds 100 decibels both before and during the intake of feed, and says this noise made by fattening pigs and dry sows could damage the ears of farmers. He recommends earmuffs if feeding lasts more than four minutes.

# THE SURVIVOR'S TALE

## Seat Belt Safety and Action

Imagine you're driving down a two-lane, wet county road doing 25 MPH in a 45 MPH zone. The van four to five car lengths in front is also creeping along at about 25 MPH. You're paying close attention to the road ahead because of the wet conditions when you notice a car pull out of a side road in front of the van. You and the van brake simultaneously and you discover you have lost control. You start pumping the brakes but pick up speed as you go down a slight hill. There is on-coming traffic in the other lane, and you are closing rapidly on the van. The only option is the ditch. You manage to get the car headed into the ditch but almost as soon as you congratulate yourself for the smart thinking, you see the culvert at the end. The nose of the car buries into the embankment and you feel the rear end



start to come over the top. Your front-seat passenger goes through the front windshield. The car comes down on the roof, crushing his upper body. The picture fades out as you drop against the crumpled roof with your neck bent at a strange angle. As reality slowly returns, you hear voices outside the car and can see the red reflection of

emergency lights through the shattered rear window. The only thought going through your mind at that time is "If only I had been wearing my seat belt!" This accident actually happened, with one slight difference. Everybody in the vehicle wore seat belts and nobody had a scratch. Who says seat belts work? **SURVIVORS DO!!!!**

# PROTECT THOSE EMPLOYEES

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## Your Actions Can Make A Difference

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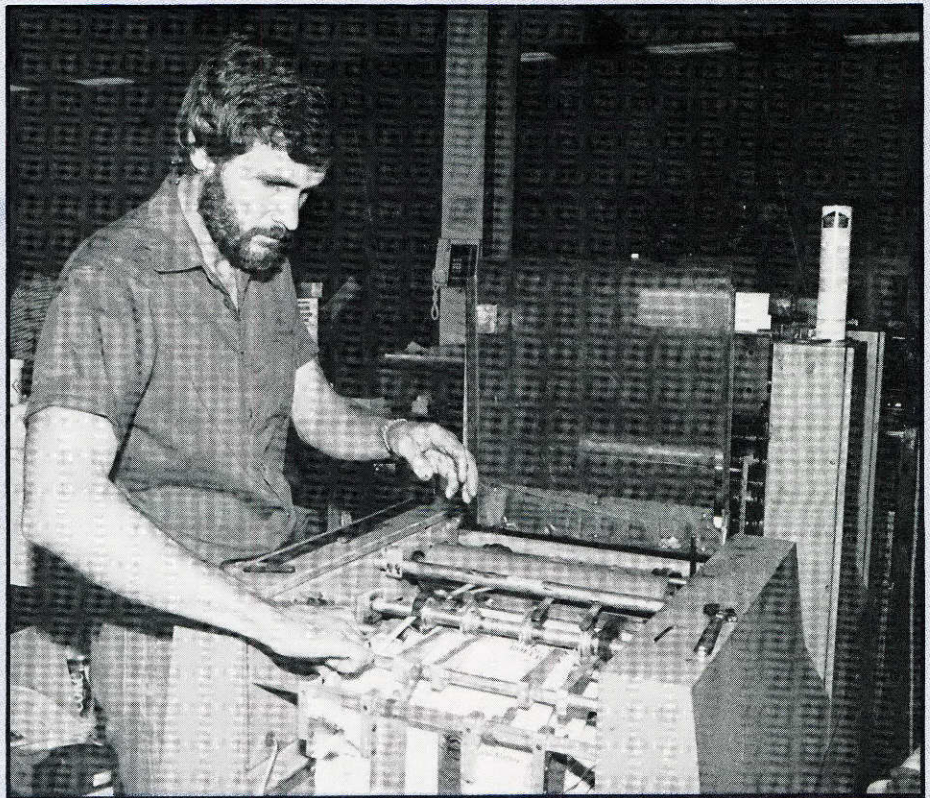
### New Employee Injuries

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Analyses of injuries to state employees show that a high percentage occur to personnel with less than one year on the job. In a few agencies, first-year employees have more than half of all accidents, and the average for all agencies is approximately one-third. It is apparent that training new employees in safety is an important area to emphasize in accident prevention efforts.

Safety and accident prevention training should begin immediately upon hiring new employees, preferably before they report to their assigned work areas. It is also important that the new employees receive on-the-job training by a person who is familiar with the proper procedures and use of equipment.

Employees must be taught not only to do their job well, but also to do it safely. Training can be accomplished in the classroom or on-the-job. New employees should be supervised more closely than experienced employees. Any time a new employee is observed committing a potentially unsafe act, they should be corrected and shown how to do the job properly.



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### “Safety Is You”

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The Safety Program at the Texas Department of Human Resources continues to progress: not only do they have a state-wide self-inspection program, but have recently completed the production of an excellent accident prevention film titled, “*Safety Is You*”. The film addresses office safety primarily, but it also gives tips about back injury prevention and traffic safety, subjects which

apply to all state agencies.

The TDHR Media Services has definitely created a winner. Due to their generosity and concern for all state employees, the film is available for other agencies to use in ½” and ¾” inch video cassettes. The length of the film is ten minutes. We recommend that you show this film to your personnel. If you wish to order the film, please call the Accident Prevention Section to reserve the cassette. (Tex-An 822-6040/475-6040).

## Pain in the Back

Work-related sprains and strains, including "back injuries," are usually associated with improper lifting, unexpected twisting, jerking or overexertion in steel mills, mines and shipyards.

But what about the office employee whose job does not call for physically demanding effort? Why do they suffer fatigue and chronic mild back pain?

Part of the answer may be due to the employee's physical condition—poor posture, lack of exercise, excessive weight or any combination of these conditions. A pot-belly exerts constant forward pull on back muscles ...under-exercised and weak abdominal and back muscles cannot support the spine...slouching rounded shoulders can result in excessive forward curve of the lower back.

Some employees suffer fatigue and chronic low back pain due to excessive stress on back muscles from working in a continuous fixed position.

**To help prevent or relieve fatigue and general low back pain:**

- Change work positions frequently.
- Adjust working heights to prevent slumping.
- Relax and rest shoulder and neck muscles.

# TRUE TALES

## The Exploding Light Bulb

I had been cleaning house all day, but my thoughts were miles away from the vacuum cleaner and dust rag. The chores were mechanical and I paid little attention to the jobs at hand.



After scrubbing the bathtub and sink, I used a damp sponge to wipe off the tiles, baseboards, door frame, and anywhere else I saw a sign of dust. As I pulled up a stool to clean the glass shade on the light over the sink, I noticed that the light bulbs were quite dusty. Without thinking, I touched the damp sponge to the hot light bulb. The bulb exploded, sending tiny splinters of glass across the suddenly dark room.

After I had calmed down and cleaned up the broken glass shards, I realized how fortunate I had been. My face had been no more than a foot away from the bulb when it shattered, and I could have suffered a serious eye injury.

I learned that you should never try to clean a light bulb when it's

hot, especially with a sponge or cloth that's wet. But the more important lesson is that even the most routine household task can be hazardous if you're careless or inattentive. If I had been concentrating on what I was doing instead of daydreaming, I would never have made such a dangerously foolish mistake.

## Primed for Trouble

On my way home one evening I passed a stranded car. I stopped to help the driver and found out that he had run out of gas and was trying to get the carburetor primed. But every time he poured gas into the carburetor and got back into the car to start it, the engine wouldn't start.

I told him to try starting the car while I poured gas. The engine started but was fixing to stop, so I poured in more gas. At that moment the engine backfired, setting the gas can on fire and spraying flames right back on me. I received severe burns on both hands and my chest.

I learned the hard way that you should never pour gasoline into an engine while someone is grinding the starter.





# THE SAFETY CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

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