

Safety Alert

To: All EGT Apprentices and Supervising Electrical Workers

From: Paul Laycock, OSH Advisor

CC: Field Officers

Date: 31-3-2010

Re: **Testing before you touch/voltstick**

SA. 21

There have been four electrical incidents over the past few months that could have been prevented, by the correct use of a Voltstick (proximity voltage detector), but were not. Fortunately, none of the incidents resulted in a serious injury, but the potential for a fatality was still present, given that one incident involved a 400 Amp HRC fuse rupturing. The incidents were not directly the result of any action carried out by apprentices but were due to mistakes made by others. The last remaining safety device between the apprentice and a potentially fatal incident was their voltstick.

1. One incident involved an apprentice removing a broken GPO in order to replace it, he had seen the main switch turned off and the circuit breakers isolated and tagged. He did not check the cables with his volt stick and received a shock because someone had illegally tapped into the incoming mains before the meter to obtain free power. Would the use of his voltstick have prevented this incident?
2. An apprentice received a shock whilst working up in a ceiling space. He needed to strip insulation tape off a cable in order to feed it down a conduit, he confirmed with his supervising electrical worker that the power was off and proceeded to remove the tape resulting in a shock. His supervising electrical worker had isolated the wrong circuit. Would the use of his voltstick have prevented this incident?
3. An apprentice reached into a ceiling space to retrieve a coil of cable, which had been installed the previous day by another tradesman, as he grabbed the coil he received a shock because his supervising electrical worker had accidentally turned on the breaker supplying the newly installed cable. Would the uses of his voltstick have prevented this incident?
4. An apprentice received a shock whilst moving a piece of cable out of his way in a ceiling space. He had been told that all the existing cabling in the office area he was working in had been removed as part of an office refit and assumed that the cable he touched was only an off cut, in fact, it was part of the lighting circuit from a part of the floor still occupied behind a dividing wall. Would the uses of his voltstick have prevented this incident?

EGT Field officers are still report finding apprentices on site without their voltsticks with them either due to them being lost, broken, lent to some one else, in the back of their cars or laying in tool bags. A voltstick is no good to you and will not be used unless you keep it with you at all times. The use of a voltstick was covered on your inductions, reiterated on you safety training courses and has been featured in several Safety Alerts

EGT Apprentices are involved in incidents due to faulty installations, faulty equipment, mistakes made by others and illegal connections to the distribution system. These problems are not always obvious to your supervising electrical worker and the only tool that will detect a live cable is going to be your volt stick as the **final test before YOU touch**. Along with the correct use of Danger Tags, Out of Service Tags and your Risk Assessment Check list and the isolation process incorporated in it, you can minimize the risk of injury or death.

YOU HAVE THE TOOLS, YOU HAVE THE TRAINING, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO

