



Protecting Workers During Electrical Safety Month

May is Electrical Safety Month, a timely reminder for businesses across Georgia to focus on one of the most serious workplace hazards. Electricity powers the world, from small systems like our computers and phones to industrial-sized machines and equipment, but if proper procedures are not followed, electricity can cause severe injuries, fatalities, fires, and costly downtime. The good news is that most electrical incidents are preventable with the right awareness and procedures.

Agriculture presents unique electrical risks due to exposure to weather, moisture, dust, and heavy equipment. Workers often operate near overhead power lines, temporary wiring, and aging electrical systems. One of the most dangerous hazards is contact with overhead lines. Equipment such as irrigation pivots, sprayers, and dump trailers can easily get too close during movement. Operators should always maintain at least ten feet of clearance and remain aware of line locations. Even without direct contact, electricity can arc and cause serious injury. Using a spotter and lowering equipment before transport are simple but effective precautions.

The agriculture industry could not exist without the use of water, but water significantly increases the risk of electrical shock, making it especially important for workers to understand the hazards associated with each job. Workers should avoid using electrical equipment with wet hands or while standing on damp surfaces. Electrical components should be kept dry and protected, and outdoor-rated equipment should be used when necessary. Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are highly effective in these environments, as they quickly shut off power when a fault is detected.

The condition of electrical equipment is another critical factor. Cords, plugs, and panels exposed to harsh conditions can quickly become damaged. Frayed wires, loose connections, and broken components increase the risk of shock and fire. Routine inspections and prompt replacement of damaged equipment are essential, especially where moisture accelerates deterioration. Extension cords are frequently misused. They should only be used temporarily and must be rated for heavy-duty, outdoor use. Damaged or overloaded cords can easily lead to fires or shocks. Similarly, proper grounding is critical. Grounded systems provide a safe path for electrical current and help prevent equipment from becoming energized. Removing grounding prongs or using improperly wired outlets eliminates this protection.

Safe maintenance practices are also essential in keeping workers protected. Before repairing or servicing equipment, it must be fully de-energized with locks and tags applied. Lockout/tagout procedures help ensure that power sources are disconnected and cannot be accidentally reactivated. This is particularly important when multiple workers have access to the same equipment. Lack of proper LOTO procedures causes over 50,000 injuries annually in the United States, accounting for

nearly 10% of all industrial accidents. Injuries resulting from LOTO failures are often severe, including amputations, lacerations, crushing injuries, burns, and electrocution. Despite all we know about LOTO, violations consistently rank among OSHA's top 10 most cited violations (often #1 in manufacturing). The first 2 people that email our office (info@agritrust.biz) and confirm reading of this article will win a \$20 gift card.

Electrical hazards are often invisible and unforgiving. Training is the most effective way to prevent electrical incidents. Workers should understand how to recognize hazards associated with each job, use equipment safely, and respond to emergencies. Let this Electrical Safety Month serve as a reminder that safety requires constant awareness and proactive effort. From farms and greenhouses to offices and warehouses, each environment presents unique electrical challenges that require attention from all those that work there. By focusing on equipment condition, safe work practices, and employee training, your business can significantly reduce the risk of injury and keep your workforce safe

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