

## Electrical Safety in the Rental Industry...

There are a few simple steps that, if followed, will eliminate most, if not all, the electrical related accidents that occur in the rental industry. These steps are developed from a study of accidents that commonly occur with electrical products. The list was also developed from the experiences of a number of rental storeowners that have been involved in litigation following an electrical accident.

### Let us be very clear on two points...

**First** - normal 120-volt electrical Power can kill you.

Most of us have received an electrical shock at one time or other in our lives. The fact that we were not injured or killed sometimes leads to the false conclusion that it can't. Well it can and does kill about 1000 people a year.

**Second** - there are some very simple things that you can do to all but eliminate the chance of an electrical accident at your store.

### Key Steps to Electrical Safety in the Rental Industry

The steps include the purchase of good quality products, inspecting and testing them and performing the required service. The other parts deal with being sure the product is sent out with all the right parts and the operator is instructed in its use.

#### Purchase and rent only high quality products

Most rental stores purchase good quality products. Such products are not only able to withstand the rigors of rental, but they are safer, perform the job better and normally provide a better return on investment.

#### Inspection

The first step here is to have a return area for all items. Nothing should be allowed to be placed back in inventory without an inspection. No single step is more important than the simple visual inspection. Have a list of key inspection points posted, by product type that must be checked. The check list should include a verification that the safety guards are in place, safety signs are clear and easy to read, the power cord and plug are in good condition and free of nicks, the strain relief are tight and functional. Loose or missing strain reliefs are a major contributor to electrical accidents with Power tools.

#### Testing

No electrical product should ever be placed back in your rental inventory without testing. No exceptions! All electrical products should be tested for ground wire continuity (unless double insulated), leakage current and operation. Party related products are no exception, they need testing too. The operational part of the test should include verification that the product is capable of performing its job. This is sometimes hard to do in a practical way, but one simple test is a measure of its current draw. Most hand tools should draw one half or less of their rated current, while they are free running. This test indicates if a product has a dragging bearing or a shorted coil that will stop it from performing its job. Also to be checked are switches and ground fault interrupters. The best test of a ground fault interrupter is to operate the product. Press the GFI's TEST button, insuring that the product turns off, and then verify that the product turns on when you press the RESET button.

#### Record Keeping

The way to stay out of court is to keep records. Be sure a record is kept of every inspection and test performed on each item. The service tag is the simplest method and they are available from a number of sources, or you can print your own. The tag is filled in at the time the inspection and testing is done, and attached to the product. It is important that the items inspected and tested are checked off and that the tag is signed and dated. When the item is rented, remove the tag and attach it to your copy of the rental contract. It there should ever be an accident with one of your rental items; you need only find your copy of the contact to prove that the product was safe then it left your store. Whenever you rent an item, you have a legal responsibility to perform a reasonable investigation to insure it is fit for the intended purpose. The service tag is your proof that that investigation was performed.

#### Maintenance

A good preventive maintenance program is clearly the key to a good long-term return on your investment. Be sure that any item red tagged during your inspection and testing step is sent directly to the repair area. The people making the repairs must be trained in the product they are servicing. No one should be allowed to perform any electrical servicing unless that person has a clear understanding of electrical circuits. The repair should be performed in a manner that returns the product to the same condition as it was when new. Avoid modifications that are not approved by the manufacturer. Following any service, be sure a visual inspection and test are performed and a new tag filled out and attached to the tool.