

SAFETY ALERT

SA 243 – Volt Sticks as Primary De-energisation Test

Background

An incident occurred where a 3rd Year Electrical Apprentice was asked by a demolition contractor to remove some 'redundant' 240v cabling that was in the way of their work area. The Apprentice proceeded to do the task without contacting his Site Supervisor as he should have done. The apprentice used a Milwaukee brand volt stick to test if the cable was dead. The volt stick showed the cable to be dead, so they proceeded with the task of removing the cable.

Halfway through the task, the 240v cable needed to be cut and the apprentice used insulated pliers to cut the cable. There was a slight pop and power in the vicinity went dead. All work in the immediate area stopped and the Supervisor was called to investigate.

It was discovered that the cable that had been cut by the apprentice had actually been live. Fortunately, the RCD safety device tripped and there was no electric shock or arc flash delivered to the apprentice.

Safety Issues

Under NO circumstances are Volt Sticks permitted to be used for primary testing or commissioning purposes. All testing must be completed with an approved testing device (i.e. multimeter, combi tester and test lamps).

Fluke brand Volt Sticks are the preferred tool to be used as secondary testing device.



RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

- Stay away from electrical lines if you are unsure if they are live or not.
- Always wear the appropriate PPE for the task that is being conducted.
- Apprentices may only carryout de-energisation checks under the direct supervision of a qualified electrical tradesperson.
- Always 'Test For Dead', using the required tools to ensure electrical circuits are non-active to prevent electrocution.
- A Volt Stick is only ever to be used as a secondary test for de-energisation. Using a Cat IV Multimeter is the primary method to check for de-energisation.

For more information regarding this incident please contact:

HSE Representative: Brendan Ewington
Contact Number: 0407914100
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Report all incidents and near misses

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.