

SAFETY ALERT

372 - Electrical Strike While Cutting Cornice

Background

During refurbishment works, a worker was cutting a section of cornice using a multitool to install an internal wall.

While cutting, the tool struck and cut a concealed live electrical cable behind the cornice, causing sparking.

The worker was positioned on a ladder at the time. No injury was sustained.

Work was immediately stopped, and the electrical system was isolated and made safe.



Safety Issues

- Cutting and penetration works can expose hidden electrical services behind walls, ceilings, and cornices.
- For this incident, services were not identified as they should not have been located there, and the circuit was not isolated, resulting in contact with a live cable.
- Where hazards are unknown, there is a risk of electric shock, burns, or fire.

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

Service Identification & Electrical Compliance

Fit out and refurbishment works must ensure:

- Electrical installations meet current Wiring Rules and Standards.
- Non-conformance hazards are identified (e.g. circuits not protected by RCD).
- Cables must not be positioned behind cornices
- Identify services and service routes behind walls, ceilings, and cornices before cutting.
- Isolate power as required.

Do not cut where services have not been confirmed.

Tools and equipment

To manage risk when cutting cornices:

- Use wall scanners to confirm service presence
- Use a gyprock saw (no other powered tools)

Isolation / Electrical Safety

- If services cannot be identified: Isolate the distribution board prior to penetration.

Working at Height

- Perform penetration work from an insulated ladder.

Required Actions

- Plan and assess works before cutting.
- Never cut blind into walls, ceilings, or cornices.
- Stop working if hazards cannot be confirmed.
- Report any service damage immediately.

For more information contact: safety@programmed.com.au

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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.