

Electricity: Why Caution is Important

It's definitely a Monday morning and your shower is doing absolutely nothing to wake you up. You think a little music might help, so you reach out of the shower to plug in the radio. Suddenly you can't move. You can't breathe and everything is turning pitch black. The steady pulse of your heart is now an erratic drumbeat and your vessels are being squeezed. Burns are left on your body where the electricity has entered and then exited. All of this has happened in a matter of seconds.

We have all experienced an electrical shock in the form of static electricity when touching a doorknob or walking across the carpet. However, an electric shock as depicted above is much more painful and can be deadly. Most often people make three mistakes when dealing with electricity:

1. They underestimate the power of electricity.
2. They think they are in complete control of electricity.
3. They think that if they get shocked they can pull away and avoid getting hurt. However, electricity moves at the speed of light, making it impossible for an individual to pull away from the circuit.

Here's a closer look at what happens to the human body when it is shocked by electricity.

- Muscles immediately tighten up and contract, locking the victim into the electric circuit.
- Lung and chest muscles constrict, making it hard to breathe and causing unconsciousness.
- Heartbeat is interrupted and the blood vessels tighten.
- Burns occur where the electricity enters and leaves the body.
- There is partial or total paralysis.

If you see an individual who is being shocked—do not touch them. The electrical shock can travel through the individual to you and use you as another pathway to the ground. Call 911 immediately.

Electricity always finds the easiest path to the ground, and it will do this through any object—including the human body. The best conductor for electricity is water, which makes the human body a prime conductor for electricity, as the human body is made up of 70 percent water.

Although electricity is most often at our demand and in control by the touch of our fingertips, it is important to respect the power of electricity. By never underestimating the power of electricity—your Monday mornings will have a much better start.