

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

SAFETY ALERT

Electrical risks to insulation installers

The purpose of this safety alert is to:

- Inform people about the danger of installing insulation near electrical equipment in ceilings.
- Provide guidance on how to control and identify a range of hazards found in ceilings.

Background

A fatality and a serious injury to another person in Brisbane in mid October is a tragic reminder of the serious risks associated with installing ceiling insulation. To ensure your safety and that of others, it is vital that you identify and control a range of hazards found in ceilings.

These hazards can relate to electrical wiring or fittings that can cause electric shock or fire, working at heights, hazardous fibres or dusts, and vermin or insects.

Insulation installers should follow the advice in the e-Alert issued by the Queensland Electrical Safety Office on 15 October 2009 and pass the information on to others that may be exposed to these risks. Further guidance for insulation installers will be published on the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website in the near future, www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

Electrical Safety Office e-Alert

issued 15 October

Electrical fatality of insulation installer

The Electrical Safety Office and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland are

investigating the fatality of an insulation installer on 14 October 2009.

A second person assisting with the work received an electric shock and burns.

While an investigation is underway, it appears that a staple, used to fix foil insulation in the roof space of a home, may have pierced an electric cable which energised the foil.

Insulation installers are warned of the dangers associated with installing conductive foil type insulation near electrical equipment including cables, light fittings and ceiling fans etc.

Installed incorrectly this could cause the insulation to become energised, not only posing an electrical risk to the installer but also to others.

A safe system of work should be used to manage such risks. This system must include measures to avoid damaging electrical equipment/cables when installing conductive material like aluminium insulation products.

The Electrical Safety Act requires an employer or self employed person to conduct their business in a way that is electrically safe. This is also relevant to non-electrical work such as installing insulation material.

While such events may not always result in death, they can still have a serious impact on your health, including burns, damage to the nervous system, brain, sensory/motor organs, heart and lungs. A shock can also throw you off balance resulting in fall injuries. The prospect of such injuries occurring in a roof space can make rescue difficult resulting in a delay in treatment.

The Electrical Safety Office has also warned installers not to underestimate other [dangers involved](#), such as the increased fire risk associated with incorrectly installing insulation around lighting fixtures.

Anyone entering a roof space should conduct a risk assessment to determine possible hazards prior to starting work.

Information on risk assessments is available at www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/law/codes/riskman/index.htm

For further information on electrical safety information visit www.fairandsafework.qld.gov.au/electricalsafety or telephone 1300 650 662.

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Further information

For more workplace health and safety information, visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Department of Justice and Attorney-General

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