

SAFETY MATTERS

MAY/JUNE 2019

‘TAKE 2’ PROVES ITS VALUE

GEM electricians step up when they see a hazard

Brian Wiemken, GEM electrician foreman and **John McGrain**, GEM electrician decided to “Take 2” and stay safe when conditions changed on a project.

The GEM electricians and the mechanical contractor were reviewing the pre-task plan for handling lockout/tagout. The lockout/tagout equipment had not yet arrived on site.

“I told the electrical engineer, the mechanical engineer, the owner and the consultants that we needed to slow it down and lock some things out before we started working.”

Brian Wiemken GEM electrician foreman

As the mechanical contractor began testing the equipment, the owner’s consultant started opening valves with the system still energized.

Wiemken and McGrain were concerned about possible burns, because the pipes had open connections to their work area.

“I said, ‘We need to step back.’ GEM doesn’t want us to work in that kind of environment and we don’t either,” Wiemken said. “I told the electrical engineer, the mechanical engineer, the owner and the consultants that we needed to slow it down and lock some things out before we started working.”

Wiemken and McGrain decided to work in another area until the next day when the system could be properly locked out.

When the GEM electricians returned the next morning, they learned that an incident happened after they left for the day. An owner’s technician had worked again on the energized system and sustained minor steam burns when a probe that should not have been under pressure shot out of the tank.

That day, the mechanical contractor was put in charge of lockout/tagout, requiring everyone on site to request permission to work on the pipes.

“We raised the issue, not for notoriety or to get credit, but so John and I could go home safe that night,” Wiemken said.



Photos: The tank and probe involved in the incident.



INSECT BITES AND STINGS

Here’s how to avoid and treat them

- Keep work areas clean and free of discarded food and wrappers.
- Stay calm and still if a single stinging insect is flying around. (Swatting may cause it to sting.)
- If you’re attacked by several stinging insects, get away from the area. (When bees sting, they release a chemical that attracts other bees.)

- If an insect is in your vehicle, stop slowly and open all windows.

What to do if you are stung

- Wash the site with soap and water.
- Remove the stinger by wiping gauze or scraping a fingernail over the area.
- Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers.

- Apply ice to reduce swelling.
- Don’t scratch because it can increase the risk of infection.

Get medical attention immediately if you have:

- Nausea
- Faintness or dizziness
- Shortness of breath and/or tightness in the chest or throat

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FIND IT-FIX IT

Make safety a continuous conversation

Eliminating hazards is a conversation - with coworkers, other contractors and even customers.

It's about alerting people to hazards and sharing ideas for working more safely.

Use Find It-Fix It to share those solutions with everyone at RLG. Here are some recent Find It-Fix Its:

Unsafe behavior: A contractor was dry-grinding concrete to install doors.
Solution: An associate asked him to use water or contain the dust.

Unsafe behavior: An associate was not tied off while in a scissor lift.
Solution: Another associate told him to properly tie off.

Unsafe behavior: A worker was driving a JLG without being tied off.
Solution: An associate told him to tie off.

Unsafe condition: Two associates were hauling steel in a truck without tie-downs.
Solution: Another associate alerted them to the hazard and suggested ways to tie down the material.

Unsafe behavior: People at a customer location were not evacuating when a plant alarm sounded.

WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Try to eliminate fall hazards first before using personal fall arrest systems

Working at heights over 6 feet? Try to eliminate the fall hazard by:

- Using a lift, scaffold or platform ladder.
- Assembling material on the ground and hoisting it into place.

Can't eliminate the fall hazard? Consider using:

- Guardrails
- Catch platforms
- Warning lines

If you cannot protect yourself with these methods, use a properly anchored personal fall arrest system – a harness and retractable/lanyard.

Solution: An associate notified plant safety.

Unsafe condition: An associate noticed unexpected strong odors in a unit.

Solution: He notified the proper authorities to assess the situation.

Unsafe behavior: A worker was cutting refracting concrete beside a tool room.

Solution: An associate asked the worker not to cut refracting concrete there.

Unsafe condition: A flatbed truck was not pulled in all the way and was sticking out of a driveway.

Solution: An associate suggested the driver pull forward 4-5 feet.

Unsafe behavior: A worker was standing on the second step from the top of a ladder.

Solution: An associate told him to get down and said he couldn't stand on the step.

Unsafe condition: A catch basin was deteriorating in a customer's parking lot.

Solution: An associate notified the customer.

Unsafe condition: Three fire extinguishers in the SRU unit were missing pins and registered low pressure.

Solution: An associate removed them from service and tagged them.

FIGHT DEHYDRATION

To boost your hydration:

- Drink at least eight glasses of water a day.
- Start drinking plenty of water before work starts.
- Drink water throughout the day—don't wait until you're thirsty.
- Working hard and sweating? Drink extra water.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, energy drinks and pop).

Urine should be pale yellow. If urine is bright or dark yellow, orange or brownish, it can mean you're not drinking enough water.

Other symptoms of dehydration include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Loss of balance
- Muscle cramps

If you notice any of these symptoms, especially combined with dark urine:

- Stop working and get out of the sun.
- Loosen your clothes.
- Sit down and rest.
- Take sips of water.

If your symptoms don't go away or worsen, seek medical help.



GEM and RLI associates at First Solar participate in OSHA's 2019 Fall Protection Stand-Down in May.