

Investigation Process

What triggers an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division?

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of an employee, an amputation or the loss of an eye.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

How is the NCDOL OSH Division notified?

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of any work-related fatality. In-patient hospitalizations of one or more employees, any work-related amputation, and any work-related loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours.

What will the investigation focus on?

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

What will happen during the investigation?

- An OSH investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

How long will the investigation take?

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

When are investigation results disclosed?

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



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The Investigation

OSH investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Energized items to which an employee may be exposed were de-energized before the employee worked on or near these items. Exceptions to this rule can be made if the employer can show that de-energizing would create additional or increased hazards or was not possible because of equipment design or operational limitations.
- In cases in which the items were not de-energized, other safety related practices were used to protect employees who might be exposed to the hazards.
- Electrical equipment used was free from recognized hazards that could cause death or physical harm.
- An employer permitted an employee to work in such close proximity to an electrical power circuit that the employee could contact the electrical power circuit in the course of work.
- Live items operating at 50 volts or more were guarded against accidental contact.
- Employees were trained in electrical safety related work practices.
- On construction sites, the employer used ground fault circuit interrupters or assured equipment grounding conductor program.
- Electrical installations with exposed live items were made accessible to qualified employees only.
- Electrical circuits and equipment were grounded.
- Flexible cords and cables were approved and suitable for conditions of use.
- A qualified person permitted to work on or near exposed energized parts had received the training and acquired the skills to distinguish exposed live parts from other parts of electrical equipment and provided with electrical protective equipment.

Standards: General Industry: Subpart S
Construction: Subpart K

Industry Type: General Industry and Construction

Accident Type: Electrocution

Statistical Data: From Jan. 1, 2012, through Sept. 30, 2014, seven workers died from contact with electricity.

What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent electrocutions?

Free training: Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

Publications: Brochures and industry guides that address electrical hazards.