

Machine Operator Electrically Shocked in Transplant Nursery¹

California NURSE Project²

SUMMARY: CASE 292-327-01

Some greenhouses grow vegetables from seeds. As the plants grow, they need to be trimmed. A celery cutter came back from his afternoon break to continue cutting celery plants. The cutting machine he used looked like a lawn mower. An extension cord was needed to reach an electrical outlet. The extension cord he used was missing the third prong. Also, puddles of water were on the floor from watering the plants. Shortly after grabbing the cutting machine, he received an electrical shock. He couldn't let go of the handle. He screamed for help.

A co-worker ran over and unplugged the cutting machine. The injured worker fell to the ground, dazed and weak. Their supervisor told the co-worker to drive the injured worker to a walk-in clinic. From there he was driven to a hospital, where he was treated and spent the night.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Employers should make sure work areas are free of hazards (such as water on the floor).
- Supervisors and workers should call 911 if someone has an electrical shock.
- Employers should use injury prevention programs. These programs can help employers identify and fix hazards.

- Workers should wear electrically insulated gloves and boots when working in wet areas with electric equipment.

The NURSE (Nurses Using Rural Sentinel Events) project is conducted by the California Occupational Health Program of the California Department of Health Services, in conjunction with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The program's goal is to prevent occupational injuries associated with agriculture. Injuries are reported by hospitals, emergency medical services, clinics, medical examiners, and coroners. Selected cases are followed up by conducting interviews of injured workers, co-workers, employers, and others involved in the incident. An on-site safety investigation is also conducted. These investigations provide detailed information on the worker, the work environment, and the potential risk factors resulting in the injury. Each investigation concludes with specific recommendations designed to prevent injuries, for the use of employers, workers, and others concerned about health and safety in agriculture.

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