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From: Meredith Brown <racer@lanl.gov>
Subject: Yellow Alert: Reporting Injuries

TITLE: Importance of PPE and Reporting/Receiving Proper Medical Attention for Injuries

IDENTIFIER: Y-1998-OR-LMESY12-0601

DATE: 06/15/98

LESSONS LEARNED STATEMENT: When handling sharp tools, employees must take extra care and wear appropriate personal protective equipment. If injuries occur, even minor injuries, it is important to report and receive medical attention immediately in order to prevent infection, hospitalization, and/or possibly surgery.

DISCUSSION: On Friday, November 14, 1997, an electrician was using a pocket knife to cut a grommet off the end of a piece of conduit. This was to facilitate the removal of wire from inside the conduit. The sharp end of the knife punctured the index finger of his left hand. The injured person did not report the incident at the time nor did he believe it was necessary to go to the medical center to receive first-aid. Instead he rinsed and dressed the punctured finger himself. During the weekend, he noticed swelling and that the finger appeared to be somewhat infected. He went to the hospital and received some treatment and was told to return if it progressed. On Sunday, the electrician returned to the hospital to receive medical attention. At that time it was determined that the infection had spread sufficiently enough to warrant admittance and that surgery would be required to help clean up the infected area. After surgery, he was given antibiotics intravenously to continue to fight the infection and was to remain in the hospital for several days.

The incident initially appeared to be minor in nature, but what resulted was a very difficult and painful surgery and hospital stay that is classified as a lost time injury with days away from work. If this injury had been reported to the supervision when it occurred and prompt medical attention had been received, this employee may have been spared all the pain and suffering.

ANALYSIS: The electrician, a subcontract employee, was aware of the companies policy on reporting accidents. However, the employee thought the wound was only a minor cut and not significant enough to report. Also the employee did not want to be involved in an incident investigation for the accident. (Note: This process has recently been simplified, but the employee was unaware of the change.) The employee was cutting away from his body as instructed by safety training, however the employee was not wearing leather gloves, which might have lessened or prevented the injury.

The injury occurred when the knife suddenly broke through the grommet. The employee had not anticipated this event and consequently had his hand inappropriately positioned.

RESOLUTION/RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: All employees should be instructed:

* LMES policy requires the reporting of injuries when they occur. Supervisors and employees have a responsibility to report injuries when they occur and to seek medical attention as soon as possible. Any on-the-job injury that requires treatment by a physician must be reported to Medical.

* Supervisors must question any injury that an employee or co-worker reports. Any injury whether work-related or off-the-job that appears to cause the employee problems or discomfort at work should be reported immediately to Medical.

* Co-workers have a responsibility to report injuries that they witness to their supervisor.

* Concern when reporting an injury should not be for potential damage to our safety record or injury rates, but instead should be about care for the individual. Peer pressure is a poor reason for failure to report injuries.

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PRIORITY DESCRIPTION: Yellow/Caution

REFERENCES: MK-Ferguson Lesson Learned No. 355 Green Alert, Occurrence Report - ORO-LMRS-Y12CM-1997-0005, Accident Investigation Report Conducted by Lockheed Martin Energy Systems, dated March 11, 1998

DOE FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY: OS - Occupational Safety & Health; EN - Engineering Design & Construction (Nuclear); NN - Engineering Design & Construction (Non-Nuclear); MA - Maintenance

LMES FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY: EC - Engineering & Construction; MA - Maintenance; SH - Safety & Health

HAZARD CODES: HH - Health/Hygiene; EL - Electrical; PP - Personnel Protection

WORK ACTIVITY: CO - Construction; FM - Facility Maintenance

KEYWORDS: Personal Protective Equipment, Reporting, Injury, Puncture

FOLLOW-UP ACTION: Information in this report is accurate to the best of our knowledge. This has been coordinated with the DOE Quality Management System Team. All DOE comments have been incorporated. As means of measuring the effectiveness of this report please notify Kim Fee at (423)576-3606, email at kif@ornl.gov of any action taken as a result of this report or of any technical inaccuracies you find. Your feedback is important and appreciated.