

“KEEPING PACE” - #8

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SIGN ELECTROCUTION:

The above outdoor electrically illuminated sign located outside a restaurant in Nashville, Tennessee fatally electrocuted a child who touched the metal frame of the sign and the grounded metal horse's head shown by the arrow in front of the sign.

A wire from the fluorescent transformer inside the sign had shorted to the sign's casing and thus to the frame. I measured about 1,000 volts to ground on the frame until I connected a standard third wire ground, as it should have been connected, between the sign's frame and a good ground. That action alone reduced the voltage on the frame to less than one volt. Thus, if only the sign had contained a standard third wire ground, this electrocution would never have occurred.

I have investigated over 45 accidental electrocutions, of which over a dozen were caused by 120 volts, A.C. In every case, the third wire ground was either non-existent or it had been interrupted at some point. Third wire grounds work! We have never observed an electrocution involving a double insulated tool or when a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) was in place.

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ELECTROCUTION:

A high school student in Paris, Kentucky, who was also a promising football star, was fatally electrocuted by a 120 volts, A.C., appliance in the high school's whirlpool bath. The appliance had a third wire ground, but the ground in the school's electrical outlet was incorrectly wired. I arranged for each of other 600 outlets in the school to be re-examined by an electrician. That examination revealed that every one of the outlets in the school was incorrectly wired. The plaintiffs, who could not sue the original electrician or the electrical inspectors because of a quirk in Kentucky law at the time, chose instead to sue the school board and coach/teachers, whom I represented, for \$3,000,000.

The day before I testified at trial, a representative from one insurance company came to town from Chicago and instructed a \$150,000 settlement. The next day I testified and the remaining insurance company received a defense verdict. That defense attorney wrote me a letter in which he said:

“I want to express our appreciation for your outstanding performance in investigation, evaluation, and presentation of your evidence in this emotionally charged electrocution case involving the death of a popular young high school football star.....I would recommend P.A.C.E., Inc., and especially yourself in any future litigation in which I might become involved, as well as to any other attorneys who looking for an outstanding expert witness to help prepare their case.”

Sincerely,



Frederick F. Franklin, P.E.
Forensic Engineer