

From the NETA Safety Committee



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For those of you who were in attendance at the recent PowerTest Electrical Maintenance and Safety Conference and attended any of the safety offerings, thank you very much for your participation. For those of you who were unable to attend, we hope to see you next time. It is great to share experience and knowledge with so many talented people.

As little as ten years ago the offerings of safety information and training in our industry were slim to minimal. Some good news is that NETA continues to be a leader for safety in several ways.

The first example is the conference that was held in March 2009 in San Antonio, Texas. The safety track on Monday with the six presenters, the safety panel discussion that was led by Jim White on Tuesday, and the safety seminars on Wednesday and Thursday were all very well attended and received at the conference. This demonstrates the excellence offered by the conference planners and the interest by the attendees.

NETA is extremely interested in the safety of every worker. Many of the NETA Accredited Companies offer safety training classes and engineering services to calculate electrical hazards. One NETA Accredited Company introduced a low-voltage (LV) transformer fault calculator/slide rule to assist technicians in the field, in a real world working environment. This tool, with the right knowledge, can help determine the flash hazard to a person working in the field. This can be accomplished in a fairly short amount of time.

As a result of the conference and its many presentations, the NETA Safety Committee wishes to share additional information with regard to two particular topics. This will hopefully continue further dialog and foster additional NETA World articles to make our workplace safer:

Labels

What is going on in the real world with labels? What percentage of the equipment in the USA and Canada is currently labeled? If it is labeled, is the information correct? The conference attendees guessed that probably less than five percent of equipment installed has labels. How long will it take until we see the widespread use of labels? More importantly, what do we do to understand the arc-flash hazard until we reach that day? These are very serious questions

to ponder, and the Safety Committee is brainstorming on how to improve these issues.

Risk/Hazard Analysis

NFPA 70E, *Standard for Electrical Safety in the Workplace* does not differentiate between a risk and a hazard. The fact that 70E does not present a difference between them has been a source of confusion for some people. The following definitions are presented as one way to clarify the similarities and differences between a risk and a hazard. These definitions are derived from several dictionaries and the internet. Following the definitions is a table that will help workers better assess the risks that are associated with a specific task.

A *hazard* is a situation which poses a level of threat to life, health, property or the environment. Most hazards are inactive or merely a possibility, with only a hypothetical chance of causing harm. Once a hazard becomes active, it can create an emergency situation.

The safety committee proposes definitions for three types of hazard. They are:

- 1. A Dormant Hazard-** This is a situation that has the potential to be hazardous, but no people, property or the environment are currently affected. For instance, a volcano next to a city

