

NZ Safety Alert

Let's work together to keep ourselves and our workers

January 2019

Arc flash from switchboard

A plant operator at the tertiary plant noticed low amp supply on his main computer for the Tertiary Plant. He went down into the MCC room where all electrical switchboards are located to see what the problem was. As the operator reset the power supply, an ARC Flash occurred which resulted in startling the operator. He went to retrieve the fire extinguisher, but it was not required.

WorkSafe's Good Practice Guidelines for Health & Safety at Opencast Mines, Alluvials and Quarries recommends that switchboards should be securely locked at all times. The cabinet doors act as a suppression if an "ARC" occurs.

Where wiring is damaged it should be reported immediately. Water should not be allowed to accumulate in switch boards or switch rooms.



MinEx data on incidents with the potential to cause harm over the 15 months to Sept 2018 shows that 6% of all incidents (72 incidents) result from pressure release, including electricity

You need to ensure that:

1. Switchboards are securely locked at all times and that only licensed electricians have access to them.
2. A review is conducted on the regularity for testing of all electrical equipment at the site
3. All staff are trained and assessed as competent in procedures for restarting "tripped" plant
4. You are aware of the requirements of the Electrical (Safety) Regulations 2010, as they pertain to your operation.

Know of an incident or near miss? Please share the learnings with us.