

## **Using an energized electrical work permit as a tool**

*By Barry Moreland*

Paperwork is a necessity on every jobsite whether it is used for ordering materials, tracking change orders and RFIs or as a means to create a safer work environment. Most people view more paperwork as negative aspect to construction but many times it is these same documents that can be used as tools to increase productivity and safety at the same time. Take for instance an energized electrical work permit.

Have you seen one? Do you know how to fill it out and why it is so important to use one every time energized work is performed? Are you using it to increase hazard awareness to your workers and facility owners? If not, you should be.

### **Five ways to use an energized electrical work permit as a tool**

1. The permit requires that you define your work tasks and assess the hazards associated with the work involved.
2. Justification for energized work. Why is it that the work cannot be performed de-energized as required by OSHA? Are there increased hazards introduced by de-energizing? The permit can be used in a job briefing to communicate to your workers the rationale behind working energized.
3. Once a hazard assessment has been performed, the permit also aids in the selection of proper personal protective equipment necessary for protection from shock and arc flash hazards.
4. The permit requires that boundaries be defined to keep unqualified workers out of harms way and that electrical workers be properly qualified for the specific energized work task.
5. Probably the most important reason for using the permit is for the approval to perform the work energized. This is a powerful way to reinforce the primary requirement to work de-energized. The permit contains a spot for the signature of the facility owner or general contractor to authorize that the specified work be performed energized. Many times this leads to a review of the work schedule and a time slot being created to de-energize the electrical equipment, thereby increasing productivity and the level of safety at the same time.

It is obvious that energized work will always be included in the electrician's job description. It is the frequency of these work tasks and the understanding that it take proper planning, tools and equipment, communication and training to safely perform this work. If it just has to be worked energized, using this permit will help you prepare to face the work hazards ahead with a level of professionalism, productivity and safety.

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