The following was our response to an e-mail from an employee concerned about Static Electricity.

Question: Are there any OSHA standards in regards to static electricity and the exposure to the ensuing shocks. I work in a paper mill. The paper moisture has been lowered recently to influence final properties. The result of this is at times I am working close to the roll that is rolling up. Many times my hair stands up while I am standing as far as 3 feet away, and while working if I touch anything metal I receive an uncomfortable shock. This shock can occur between my foot(which is in a steel toe reinforced shoe) and the floor while I am not physically in contact with anything. It also occurs at other times when I am within the static field and happen to touch a metal part of the machine. This is very painful and I am concerned whether it can cause negative health effects.

Answer: There are no specific standards for static electricity although static electricity has some inherent hazards and the potential for fire around flammables and combustibles exist; grounding and bonding may be required.

Static shock can result in discomfort and, under some circumstances, injury to workers due to involuntary reactions. **NFPA 77, Recommended Practice on Static Electricity,** indicates that the discharge in itself is not dangerous to humans, but it may cause an involuntary reaction that results in a fall or entanglement with moving machinery.

Hopefully you have reported this issue to management and that the system has been checked for electrical integrity. The accumulation of static electricity can be prevented in many circumstances. NFPA 77 provides methods for the control of static electricity and would serve as a good resource.