

ELECTRICAL POWER TOOL SAFETY ON BOARD MARINE VESSELS

This safety alert warns the Tasmanian fishing and maritime industry of the dangers of using 240-volt electric power tools and equipment on vessels where exposure to sea water is a risk factor.

Background

In November 2013, a deckhand working on a fishing vessel operating in the Gulf of Carpentaria was killed when a wave flooded the deck of the vessel.

He was operating a 240-volt portable angle grinder connected by an extension lead to a power socket within the vessel.

The deckhand was electrocuted when water from the wave made contact with the angle grinder and its plug.

Contributing factors

- The angle grinder was not protected by a residual current device (RCD).
- The deckhand was working barefoot.

Actions required

- WorkSafe Tasmania strongly recommends that all marine vessel owners and skippers in charge of vessels conduct a risk assessment to identify:
 - if electrical equipment is designed to be used in the intended work environment
 - possible safety hazards associated with the electrical equipment and significance of the risk
 - what measures can be implemented to control or eliminate the risks.
- Portable electrical tools must either be specifically designed for use in a marine environment or used in locations where they are not exposed to contact with water.
- Portable mains powered electrical tools and extension leads must be kept away from water.
- RCDs must protect all circuits used to supply portable electrical equipment.
- Appropriate personnel protective equipment (PPE) must be worn at all times.

Further information

You can find guidance on these codes of practice, available at www.worksafe.tas.gov.au :

- Managing the Work Environment and Facilities — search for 'CPI 24'
- How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks — search for 'CPI 12'

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