

440 Volts



18 Years of Experience



It took 440 volts and a mere slip of the hand, and a Navy veteran was permanently disfigured and possibly disabled from an electrical shock. The shock resulted in a 3rd degree burn at the base of his thumb, requiring reconstructive surgery. He also needed occupational therapy, and lost not only 30 days of work immediately following his injury, but needed an additional 42 days of limited duty. And it happened because he ignored best practices and his experience from working with electricity.

It began as a simple enough task. The electrician's mate had replaced a switchboard breaker for the emergency diesel generator when he noticed a flickering panel indicator light. The Sailor assumed the indicator-light transformer was loose, so he

gripped it with a pair of vice grips to tighten the light cover.

To make sure the transformer wouldn't turn and twist its wires, the EM opened the switchboard panel door so he could watch as he turned the light cover. His left hand was on the outside of the panel, tightening the light cover, while his right hand held the panel door open so he could be sure he wasn't turning the transformer. His right hand then suddenly slipped into the panel and touched a hot, 440-volt, AC-indicating-light transformer.

Despite his experience, the electrician's mate was not wearing electrical safety gloves, nor was he following work procedures. Eighteen years of experience and his flesh went up in smoke. ☹️