

THIS CIRCUIT IS HOT

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Preparing Navy chow can be dangerous, even under ideal circumstances. Cleaning galley equipment is dangerous, too, but also viewed as “something we just have to get done.” We have recipe cards for food preparation, operating instructions for galley equipment, and even cleaning instructions for galley equipment. Unfortunately, we don’t always follow them.

Despite warnings, instructions and precautions, ships’ galleys have more than their share of hazards and unwary victims. Electricity continues to be a deadly shipmate: It is silent but can deliver a lethal blow to an unsuspecting crew member.

An MS2 recently suffered severe electrical shock when cleaning a grease-interceptor-hood control cabinet while preparing for an upcoming Supply Management Inspection. She climbed onto a three-foot-high, metal countertop underneath the control cabinet and opened the panel. With the panel open, a missing fastener exposed her to energized electrical components on the electrical control-panel door. While kneeling, the MS2 began to wipe the interior of the wash-tank side of the control cabinet with a wet green scrubber in her right hand.

Her left forearm touched the switch on the door, which completed an electrical circuit and let current enter her left forearm, flow across her chest for several seconds and through her right arm, then exit through her right index finger. The surge disfigured her left forearm and knocked her unconscious.

There was a danger sign inside the controller stating, “Caution! This Circuit Is Hot!” Stress seems to have contributed to the incident because galley personnel were cleaning for the upcoming inspection.

After reading this mishap report, I wondered why this Sailor was even cleaning the inside of the ventilation controller. Such electrical equipment should be serviced and maintained only by trained and supervised electrician’s mates. Supervisors cannot let themselves be pressured to complete a task and direct Sailors to repair, adjust, or clean a piece of



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equipment without identifying potential or existing hazards. Hazard assessment identifies a potential condition which could injure or kill personnel.

There are always risks involved when cleaning galley equipment, but we can—and must—manage those risks. In the case of the shocked MS2: Why was she using water to clean inside an energized controller, and why did she not secure the equipment and adhere to tagout procedures?

Supply officers, galley supervisors, pass the word. Make sure your Sailors follow established electrical safety procedures, and be sure equipment operating and cleaning instructions are posted. ☺

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For More Info...

Refer to NSTM, Chapter 300, the NavOsh program manual for Forces Afloat (OpNavInst 5100.19D) and NavSup P-421, Food Service Operations.