

June 2009

**Re: Advisory regarding identified public safety concerns with street lights**

Over the past two years the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) has been made aware of an increasing number of inadvertent shock incidents caused by faulty electrical wiring in street lights across the province.

In summer 2007, a 9 year old girl and her mother received an electric shock while touching a street light pole in the City of Welland next to their house; the shock was caused by a deteriorated connection in the hand hole located on the pole.

A dog in the City of Toronto was electrocuted in 2008 while walking next to a street light that had a faulted underground connection in the hand well that energized the snow covered sidewalk. Over the past two years, four dogs in the City of Toronto have also received similar electric shocks while walking on the sidewalk.

A woman in the City of Barrie was shocked in a private parking lot in 2009; the wires that caused the incident showed signs of deterioration due to excess road salt causing it to become electrified.

The most recent incident, reported in early 2009, involved a child in Toronto who suffered an electric shock while walking along a sidewalk during a school trip. The shock was caused by faulty wiring in a street light.

In all occurrences, members of the public and/or their pets were not protected from electrical faults while walking near street poles and along sidewalks. This has raised a number of public safety concerns for ESA.

Common factors in these occurrences that contributed to the incidents included:

- Continuous exposure to salt, dirt, grease and slush;
- No consistency in the design, maintenance and repair of the electrical installations;
- Repairs not performed to acceptable safety standards;
- Deterioration of wire insulation; and
- Outdated insulation methods.

In response to these occurrences, the ESA is reminding Ontario municipalities that it is their responsibility under the Ontario Electrical Safety Code (OESC) to maintain their street lighting assets (e.g. poles, hand wells) and inspect for any potential hazards (presence of voltage) that may result in a member of the public being shocked or otherwise injured.

ESA recommends that given the number of reported incidents, all municipalities examine their street lighting assets to ensure they are safe. If a potential electrical hazard is identified, the municipality has a responsibility to set out a remedial plan of action to address the hazards identified. Any repairs undertaken to installations are required to be made in accordance with the OESC and are required to be inspected by ESA.

To assist you in preventing any potential electrical hazards from street light assets, ESA would like to invite you to a symposium on August 20, 2009 on street lighting issues. The intent of the symposium is to provide further information to street light asset owners and to provide a forum for asset owners to ask questions and learn from the experiences of other municipalities.

ESA hopes that this symposium will assist you in appropriately determining what, if any, action you should consider taking proactively to prevent similar circumstances from occurring with your street light assets.

Although further information will be forthcoming, the following topics are being considered for the upcoming symposium:

- Review of ESA's street lighting system incident reports, identifying key issues;
- Review of remedial actions;
- Review of reports from other areas experiencing similar problems;
- Methods of controlling voltage presence; and
- Guidelines for street lighting installations.

A Fax back form is included to confirm your attendance.

Additional information to assist municipalities undertaking reviews of their street lighting assets is available on our website at [www.esasafe.com](http://www.esasafe.com).

Should you have any questions or require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Ted Olechna, Provincial Code Engineer at 905-712-5366 or via email at [ted.olechna@electricalsafety.on.ca](mailto:ted.olechna@electricalsafety.on.ca).

Thank you for cooperation in addressing this very important public safety concern.

Sincerely,



Peter Marcucci  
V.P. Regulatory Affairs  
Electrical Safety Authority

Cc: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services

Attachment