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BC Safety Authority's Relaxed Standards puts Electrical Workers at Risk:

An agreement between BC Safety Authority (BCSA) and Applied Science Technicians and Technologists of BC (ASTTBC) allows workers who are not red seal certified electricians to perform electrical installations. "This puts workers at risk despite our efforts to improve regulations," says Deborah Cahill, President of the Electrical Contractors Association of BC. (ECABC)

The ECABC has been in a long debate with BCSA who signed an agreement with ASTTBC to certify restricted licenses for electrical work in June 2011. Cahill adds, "From the beginning ECABC and its members have been very concerned with this initiative and the effect it will have on both workers and public safety. The result of this agreement has workers - who are not red seal certified electricians - performing work on electrical installations under these restricted licenses. This includes installations of 30 amps, 3 phase and up to 250 volts, as well as work on critical life safety systems. This decision is unacceptable to us. A serious accident in Ontario is evidence for what could happen in BC."

Unlicensed Electrical Worker Suffers Arc Flash Injury. Employer fined \$70,000

On July 24, 2012, ThyssenKrupp Industrial Services Canada Inc. was convicted in court of violating Ontario's Electricity Act by hiring an unlicensed individual to do electrical work. The individual suffered serious arc flash injuries while attempting to remove conductors from an electrical panel. A fine of \$70,000 was imposed, which included \$50,000 to Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) to be used for electrical safety training.

An arc flash occurs when electrical current moves through the air creating a fiery explosion. A worker will be engulfed in a ball of flame in a split second and is also typically struck by molten metal shrapnel from exploding electrical equipment.

"Obviously, this could have been avoided saving a devastating injury," commented ECABC President Deborah Cahill. "Ignoring regulations is one thing however putting workers at risk because of relaxed standards is the main issue here. I hope the BC Safety Authority is paying attention to what can happen when unqualified, unlicensed electrical workers attempt to go beyond their training and expertise."

"The agreement between BCSA and ASTTBC should be suspended until such time as our concerns are acknowledged and addressed. We have attended numerous meetings with representatives from both organizations to voice our concerns as an industry, however it was apparent that the outcome had been predetermined and our viewpoint was not being considered. One of the most disconcerting aspects of this issue is that the agreement was signed without a verified training and certification process being in place. Without these measures there is considerable risk. The Ontario incident proves our argument," concluded Cahill.

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