

SAFETY PLAN FOR PLUMBERS

Purpose

This brochure outlines risks, and how to avoid receiving an electric shock from metallic water pipes due to faults within the electricity supply system.

Metallic water pipe systems are used extensively as a means of earthing the electricity supply system, even in properties built after 1976 that are required to have the main earth wire connected to an earthing electrode (rod) driven into the ground.

If an electrical fault occurs then the water pipe can become 'alive' – and therefore dangerous.

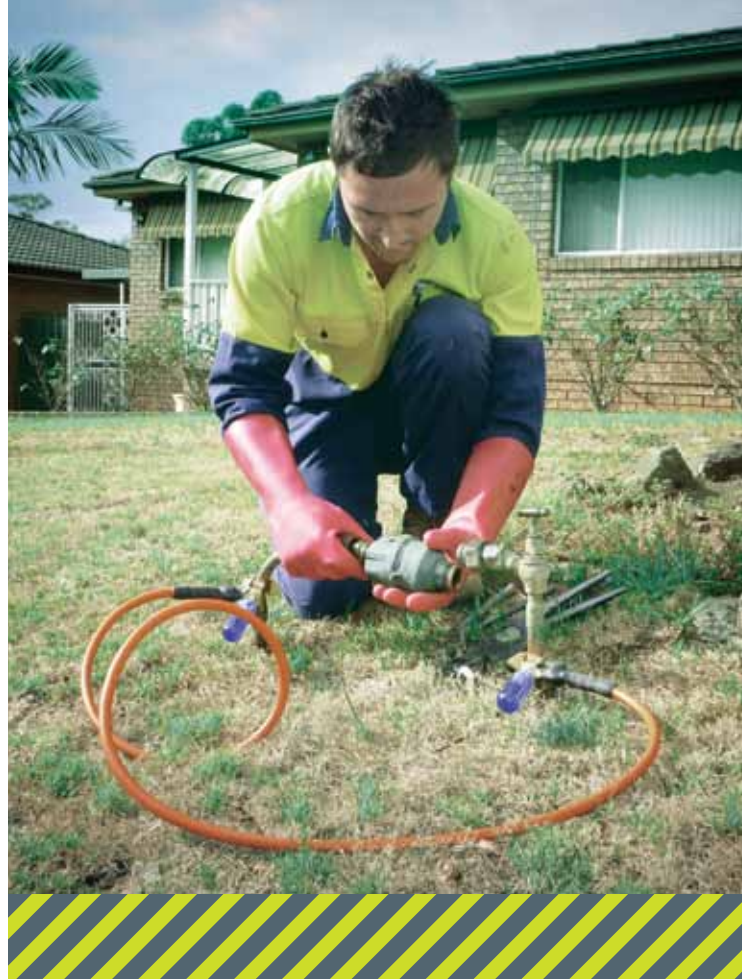
Bridge the gap

If there is a fault you may feel a tingle from pipes or taps. Stop work immediately and contact Endeavour Energy.

When cutting water pipes or removing a meter, ensure that you always use a bridging conductor across the cut/break before cutting and keep it in place until the pipe is permanently rejoined. Such work should only be undertaken by qualified people using the appropriate bridging conductor in accordance with AS/NZS 3500.1:2003 Part 5.2, Electrical Safety Precautions and Earthing.

Get a sparky

In circumstance where an earth wire needs to be disconnected from a pipe and/or reconnected to a pipe, an electrical contractor must be contacted to perform the task and ensure the system is safe. Similarly, when replacing part of a copper water system with plastic pipes or non-metallic fittings or couplings, an electrical contractor must be engaged to install an earthing electrode and ensure the system is effectively earthed.



Storm precautions

Lightning can also damage electrical equipment and can conduct through metallic pipes and fittings. To improve plumbing safety when lightning is about, you should cease contact with any metal pipes and fittings.

Check power points

If you plug your equipment into a faulty power point your whole machine could become 'alive'. That's why it is important to use a power point safety tester to check a customer's power point before you use it. For added protection against electric shock from damaged cords or faulty equipment, use a portable safety switch (Residual Current Device).

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Be aware

When an electrical fault occurs, metallic water pipes can become 'alive' resulting in an electric shock which could be fatal.

The risks increase if you:

- Cut a water pipe
- Remove a water meter
- Disconnect the main earth wire from the water pipe.

Plan the job

- 01** Find the main switches for the premises and then turn them off. Attach 'Danger Tags'. Be aware this step alone will not guarantee your safety as other faults elsewhere could still make the water pipes 'alive'.
- 02** If you are replacing all or part of the metallic water system with a plastic pipe, ask a qualified electrician to check the installation to ensure the electricity system is still effectively earthed.
- 03** Contact an electrical contractor when an earth wire needs to be disconnected or reconnected to a water pipe or when replacing part of a copper water system with plastic pipes or non-metallic fittings or couplings.
- 04** Test power points and use a safety switch to reduce the risk of shock from your portable tools. Make sure you have your tool and extension leads tested regularly and tagged including bridging conductors.
- 05** Stop immediately if you feel a tingle or see electrical arcs. Contact Endeavour Energy immediately on **131 003**.

YOUR SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY

The danger

Under normal operations electricity flows through the active conductor into a premises, whilst the neutral conductor provides the return path for electric current to the substation. If a fault occurs at the customer's or neighbouring premises or in the mains neutral in the street, the electricity may not be able to follow its normal course and flow along metallic water pipes instead. Such faults may remain undetected for prolonged periods of time, especially if nobody has received a shock or noticed a tingling sensation from taps or pipes. Under these conditions the pipe can be energised and cause dangerous shocks if safe work procedures are not applied prior to and during any work on the pipe.

SAFETY EXCELLENCE

IN EMERGENCIES CALL 131 003

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you have any questions about what you should do to stay safe around damaged power lines and other electrical infrastructure please call 131 081 or visit us at www.endeavourenergy.com.au

DANGER IN THE PIPELINE

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Call 131 003 and put safety first.
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