

Safe Plugging and Unplugging Reefer Units in Longshoring and Marine Terminals

Refrigerated cargo containers are commonly referred to as “reefer units.” Connecting (plugging) and disconnecting (unplugging) them from an electrical power supply poses a significant safety hazard. Employers must protect workers from burn, electrical shock and electrical hazards (arc-flash and arc-blast) when the workers are plugging and unplugging reefer units on board ships and in marine terminals. Employers should provide toolbox safety talks to ensure that workers are aware of hazards associated with plugging and unplugging reefer units.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Plugs, Cords and Power Supply (see 29 CFR 1910, Subpart S)

- **Employers** must ensure that all live parts on reefer units are suitably guarded, isolated, or insulated to protect workers from accidental contact.
- **Shut off the power supply controls** before plugging or unplugging a reefer unit.
- Workers should immediately report all damaged or live parts to the foreperson or supervisor. Power cords and receptacles must be free of damage.
- **Do not** step on cords or cables.
- Ensure that plugs are clean and dry before plugging them into a receptacle. Use caution when plugging or unplugging reefers during rain or snow.



Do not plug in reefer units if wires are exposed.

For more information:



U.S. Department of Labor

www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA (6742)

Safe Access

- **Employers** must provide safe access for workers to retrieve cords on reefers in marine terminals or when stowed on vessels.
- **Employers** must ensure that portable ladders are in safe condition and secured in place prior to use.
- Workers should stay within the safety rail and should not stand on rails or reach over rails to perform duties.
- When working on a ladder or stairway, workers can maintain a stable position by staying between the side rails of the ladder or stairway.
- Remain alert — be aware that the fans in reefer units may start up at any time, which may startle nearby workers, as well as blow dust or debris into the work area and expose workers to impact or respiratory hazards.

Remember

- **Make sure that the power is off before plugging or unplugging reefer units.**
- **Report all damaged equipment.**
- **Wear the proper PPE, including gloves, goggles and hearing protection.**
- **Access elevated reefer units safely.**

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