



# Media Release - SafeWork SA

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## FINE OVER ELECTRICAL BURN TO TRAINEE

**A Whyalla electrical contractor has been convicted and fined today over an incident, in which a young trainee suffered burns that resulted from an arc flash.**

In delivering his penalty to **ICE Engineering and Construction Pty Ltd**, Industrial Magistrate Michael Ardlie said:

*“The defendant failed in its obligations to a very junior worker. Whilst it had safety systems in place, those safety systems were not utilised.”*

The SA Industrial Relations Court heard how in April 2007, the then-17 year old male had been engaged as a trainee with the defendant for just three weeks. At the time of the incident, he was at a local business helping with work on a circuit distribution board.

When he used an insulated copper wire to touch a live part of a circuit breaker, an arc flash resulted which knocked the youth to the ground and burned his face, neck and arms. While he required hospital treatment, he has since returned to work and remains with the employer.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching section 19(1) of the *Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986* in failing to provide a safe system of work and appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision.

The court heard that on the day:

- the trainee was supervised by a third year apprentice, not a qualified tradesperson
- no job safety analysis had been done on the tasks the trainee was to do
- the trainee had no understanding of the operation and design of the board and its components.

Magistrate Ardlie fined the company **\$15,000** after a discount of 25 per cent for its early guilty plea, contrition and remedial action. However he declined an application by the defendant not to record a conviction saying:

*“The incident ... has served as a reminder to the defendant that although it may have systems in place, it does need to implement those systems at a practical level in relation to each work site it attends, especially given the environment in which it works.”*

SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson says it reinforces the view that any workplace safety system must be consistently followed in order to be fully effective.

“Statistically young workers are always at greater risk of harm, and coupled with the hazard of electricity, this incident should emphasise to the electrical services industry that young workers should always enjoy the full protection of a diligently applied safety regime.”