



# Electrical Panel Accessibility

When an employee receives a shock from an electrical circuit or appliance in the workplace, shutting off the source of power may be the only safe method of removing the individual from contact with the electric source. Easy access to electrical panels is essential for the protection of employees in the workplace, and panels should never be blocked or inaccessible. For speed in an emergency, it is also critical that circuit breakers are clearly labeled with accurate and up-to-date directories.

Blocking electrical panels that house circuit breakers is a violation of both Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and a violation of National Fire Protection Association Codes (NFPA). The Code of Federal Regulations and the National Electric Code establish legally required minimums for adequate clearance space around electric equipment, including electrical panels and circuit breakers.

## Fast Facts About Electrical Panel Accessibility

### Damage Caused by Power Switch Gear or Overcurrent Protection Devices (Circuit Breakers) in 1999\*

- 100 fires
- 5 civilian injuries
- \$800,000 in direct property damage

\* Source: National Fire Protection Association Fire and Research Division, June 2003

### Statistics on Injuries and Losses Related to Electric Parts in 2002\*

- 13.4 injuries per 10,000 employees
- 122 fatal injuries
- 32% of employees unable to work because of injuries from electric parts were away for thirty-one days or more

\* Source: US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Electric parts" is a classification for unattached electric parts which primarily carry or generate electrical currents. This includes electric wiring, generators, transformers, controls, switchboards, alternators, coils, etc.

### Regulations Related to Electric Panel Clearance

- The Code of Federal Regulations (29CFR1921.303 (g)) requires sufficient access and working space around all equipment serving 600 volts or less. For equipment serving between 120 volts and 250 volts, the regulations require a minimum of three feet of clearance
- The National Electrical Code (NFPA 70 110-26) requires a minimum of three feet of clearance for all electrical equipment serving 600 volts or less

# Office of Compliance Safety and Health **FAST FACTS**

## Examples of Inaccessible Electrical Panel Access

At right is an example of blocked electrical panels found on an inspection of a Congressional facility. These electrical panels are not only denied a three foot clearance, but the table that is pushed against them would take a considerable amount of time to move in case of an electrical emergency.

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To the left is an electrical closet in a Congressional facility. The door is blocked by computers and office furniture. An added hazard is the lack of clear signage for the closet or any designation as to whether the panels inside are up to date or in serviceable order.

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*desks.*

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