
Working Safely with Signs

In February 1998, a maintenance worker was electrocuted while changing fluorescent lamps in a commercial sign. Investigation revealed the sign did not have an integral disconnect switch.

A coroner's jury recommended that commercial customers be advised of the dangers of working on signs that do not have an integral disconnect switch.

Ontario Hydro is advising all customers not to work on energized signs.

Since 1990 The Ontario Electrical Safety Code required:

Under Section 34-010 Construction - that all signs and outline lighting equipment manufactured wholly or in part in the field shall conform in construction to the requirements of CSA standard C22.2 No. 207, Electric Signs

Under Section 34-012 Disconnecting Means - each outline lighting installation, and each sign other than the portable type, shall be provided with a *disconnecting means* which shall:

- open all ungrounded conductors;
- be suitable for conditions of installation such as exposure to weather; and
- be integral with the sign or outline lighting.

Signs Installed prior to 1990:

Were allowed to have the disconnecting means:

- within sight of the sign or outline lighting it disconnected, or
- elsewhere, if capable of being locked in the open position.

Disconnect switches in accordance with the Code ensures that workers have full control over the energy supply to the sign.

Customers who have concerns:

Customers who have concerns may contact their local Ontario Hydro Electrical Inspection office and request a general inspection.

Any work should be done by a licensed electrical contractor or certified electrician.

The Electrical Safety Code requires that all new sign installations and any changes be inspected by Ontario Hydro Electrical Inspection. If you have any questions as to if your sign has been inspected contact your local inspection office.

The location of the disconnecting means is dependent on the date of installation and the CODE that was in effect at that time.