



INJURY BULLETIN

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QISU - update....

What's new at Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit includes a new name - QISU - which more concisely conveys its role; to collect and disseminate Queensland injury data.

Data Collection

QISU's surveillance activity is in the process of expanding and upgrading. By 1998 almost all data from participating hospital emergency departments will be collected electronically.

The Mt Isa and Mackay and district hospitals are to be included as remote and regional samples, while QISU's urban collection, based on the Brisbane southside hospitals* will continue with the addition of Royal Children's Hospital data.

* Mater Adult Hospital, Mater Children's Hospital, Mater Private Emergency Care Centre, Logan Hospital, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital, Redland Hospital.

Location

The QISU office has moved temporarily, from Clarence Court to Level 2, Aubigny Place in the Mater complex. Please note QISU's new fax number: 07 3840 1684.

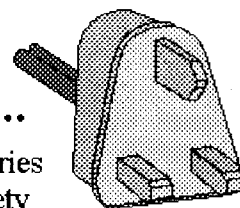
Phone number remains 07 3840 8569.

World Wide Web

QISU is developing a web site which can be found at; <http://www.powerup.com.au/~qisu> Adrian Horth, QISU coordinator, would welcome feedback and suggestions for inclusions or changes.

Inside this issue...

- Electrical injuries
- Electrical safety
- Contact burns from electrical appliances
- SEASON WATCH - Ceiling & pedestal fan injuries



Electrical Injuries

Electricity is as much taken for granted as the myriad of appliances and equipment it powers that we constantly rely on. However, awareness of the potential for harm from electricity, needs to prevail.

According to the Department of Mines and Energy, Electrical Safety branch, there were 20 fatal electrical injuries in Queensland in the twelve months to June 30 1997.

51 cases of non-fatal electrical injury were recorded by QISU over a two year period 1995-96.

Five of those injured were less than ten years old; two required hospital admission. In one case the child had put her fingers into a power outlet socket, another had been sucking an appliance cord while a third had been playing with a sewing machine peddle.

While the majority of injuries (86%) were systemic electrical injuries, there were also four burns (two of them requiring hospital admission) and a dislocated shoulder sustained when an electric shock propelled the person backwards, causing him to land on his shoulder.

Just over half (55%) of the injuries occurred while in paid work. They included cases of unintentionally touching live wires, carrying out repairs or attempting to use faulty equipment or appliances.

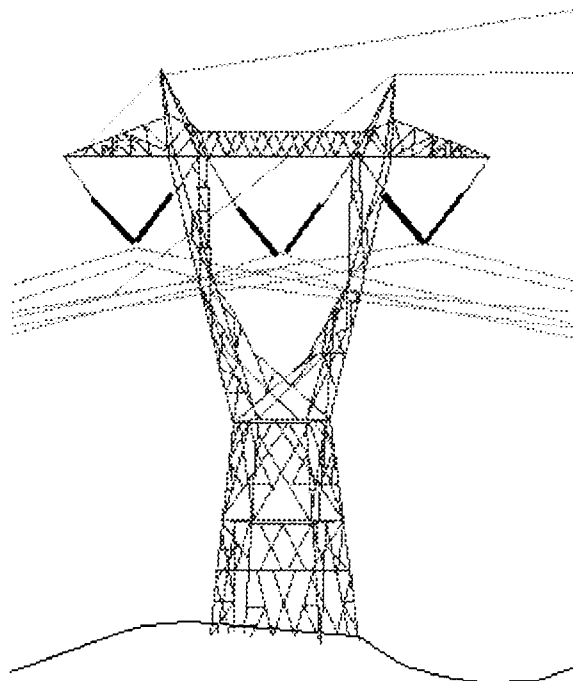
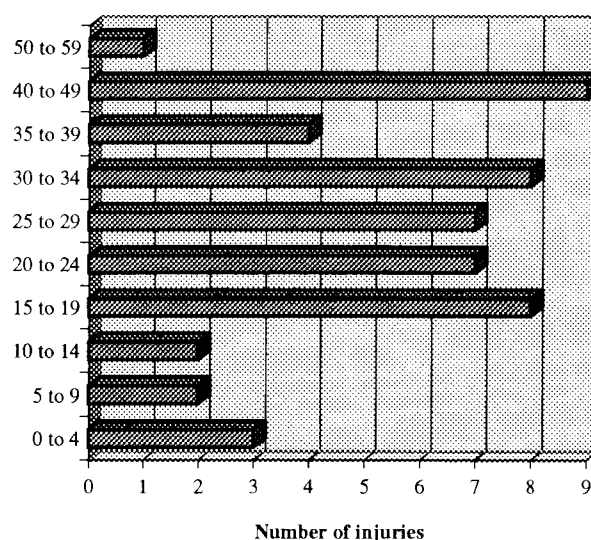


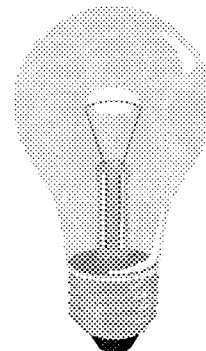
Fig. 1. Electrical injuries, 1995-96, by age.



A further 22% were carrying out chores at home, including changing light bulbs, unintentionally cutting through electric cords and switching on faulty appliances.

One-quarter of the injuries happened in trade or service areas while 45% were in the home.

Electrical safety



SAFETY SWITCHES - provide added protection from electric shock or electrocution by cutting off power almost instantly when a fault occurs in an appliance, circuit wiring or through misuse. A safety switch is able to detect any flow of current to earth, perhaps through a person, and switch off the power in 1/30th of a heart beat. It is believed that if everyone used safety switches it would at least halve the number of fatal electrical injuries occurring in Queensland.

WATER- Extra care should be taken around water as it conducts electricity. A severe shock could result from touching electrical appliances or switches with wet hands. Hairdryers left where they could fall into a bath or basin are particularly hazardous.

SHOES -Most victims of fatal or serious electrical injury were barefoot. Dry, rubber or plastic soled shoes are essential when using electrical appliances in laundries, on concrete floors or outdoors.

MAINTENANCE - Frayed cords and broken switches are a hazard and need to be replaced. Always treat a slight electric shock or tingle from an appliance as a warning and advise the electricity authority immediately.

OVERHEAD POWERLINES - The simple message is LOOK UP AND LIVE! Aluminium yacht masts, tip trucks, cranes, irrigation pipes and antennas can easily contact overhead powerlines causing severe injury or death. Kites and model aeroplanes also pose a hazard.

These and further electrical safety guidelines are available from the Office of the Energy Regulator, Department of Minerals and Energy or local electricity authorities.



Fans- Ceiling & Pedestal

As the weather warms up and we look to electric fans to stay cool, it is timely to remember the potential hazard they pose.

Last year (1996) QISU recorded 27 injuries involving ceiling or pedestal fans. The majority (70%) of these were ceiling fans.

Children < 10 years old were most at risk and represented 41% of the sample. They were most often injured when lifted up into the path of a ceiling fan (15%), when they put their finger into a floor or pedestal fan (15%) or when jumping on or from a bed (7%).

SEASON WATCH

The four admissions were all children and included two cases of fractured skulls. As would be expected the majority of injuries were lacerations and cuts (88%).

Half of the injuries were to the head and all but one other, were to the hand or fingers.

All but two of the injuries occurred in the home, where they were most likely to take place in the bedroom (44%).

In 26% of cases, the injury occurred while carrying out household chores, including *painting the ceiling* and *taking down curtains*. 15% of those injured stated they were standing on a chair or bed.

Contact burns - involving electrical appliances

QISU recorded 59 contact burns involving electrical appliances during the period January 1995 to December 1996.

Hotplates were the most common source of injury (32%) followed by irons (24%).

54% of the injuries were to children, 0-14 years and 27% to young people, 15-24 years.

27% of the cases occurred while carrying out chores and 17% while in paid employment.

Injuries were usually to the hand or finger (71%), 13.5% were to the arm and 5% to the foot.

Three-quarters of the burns happened at home, 10% in a trade or service area and 7% in a hospital.

APPLIANCE	NUMBER
Hotplate	19
Iron	14
Oven door	5
Light bulbs	4
Grill	3
Stove	2
Steriliser	2
Heater	2
Urn	2
Deep fryer	2
Toaster	2
Frypan	1
Hot water system	1

Figure 2 Number of contact burns by appliance, 1995-96

Injury scenarios included:

"ironing at home when child grabbed hot iron"

"pulled iron down onto chest and arm"

"cleaning stove and touched hotplate"

"put hand on hotplate to see if it was off"

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"standing near the stove when leant on the grill plate"



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