

What's the Risk?

Abandoned Wiring



THE ISSUE

Changes to the electrical systems in buildings is a common occurrence – lights are moved or removed, motors are disconnected, circulation fans are abandoned, etc. In some cases, the wiring is left in place and not terminated at the supply creating a situation where electrical shocks or fires can occur. According to the National Electrical Code, abandoned wiring is identified as “a cable that is not terminated at equipment and not identified for future use with a tag.”



WHAT'S THE RISK?

Abandoned or unused wires in a building may indicate low quality work by previous electrician(s) or property owners. If these wires are energized, they pose a serious safety risk (shock or electrocution), and fire hazard. Environmental changes within a building or contact with combustible materials can cause abandoned energized wires to arc or short circuit. Building owners are often shocked (pun intended) to learn that abandoned wires are energized.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The safest solution is to completely remove all abandoned wiring to eliminate any chance of a fire or shock hazard. Unused wiring left in place for “future use” is acceptable if it is properly terminated and tagged. ESA bulletin 12-25-2 addresses unused wiring, “Unused wiring shall be properly terminated or removed. Wiring that is concealed and inaccessible shall be cut off where exposed, to be too short to be reused.”

