It appears that our string of injury free months has ended. On a refinery job, a Technician tripped and fell. When he went to break his fall, he extended his arms. The area where he fell included a step down to a platform one step lower. His arms landed on the platform one step below his feet. An initial evaluation indicated a simple fracture of the wrist. During a follow up visit, it was determined that a pin needs to be surgically inserted. This is proposed to be done on an outpatient basis.

This type of incident can happen to almost anybody at any time. Awareness and caution are the two best countermeasures. To the extent possible, we should always clear the work area and travel lanes of tripping hazards (our own or other's). Sometimes this is difficult in the period around startup while the construction activities are ending and the production activities are starting. After the incident, there was some indication that lighting may have been inadequate in this area. This type of issue needs to be addressed with the client at the start of the job. It is also possible to just be in too big a rush and to inadvertently cause a situation. As always, there is no substitute for caution, judgment, and alertness.

This will of course contribute to the safety statistics that are evaluated by clients before awarding us work. Our three year trailing average includes several serious incidents (even though our most recent year was injury free). These are headwinds to obtaining orders that we would prefer to be without. Our only recourse is to redouble our efforts to work injury free.

Speaking of safety, we had an incident on a glass furnace drain in Mexico where a client employee accidentally shut off the power to our drain water pump. This obviously caused a major event at the hole when the water stopped. I think that there are several lessons to be learned in this incident.

The client employee was an electrician who was assigned to isolate the power on the glass forming machines that were being shutdown due to the furnace outage. He went to the forming machine motor control center and started pulling switches. The picture below shows the panel shortly after restarting the drain.



There are two things of interest in this picture. The first is that the only indication that this forming machine breaker had been reassigned to a safety critical task (the Hotwork pump) was a small white label that says "Hot Works 440v". An electrician who was told to power off forming machines would have to be pretty knowledgeable and alert to catch that little white label and know that something bad might happen if the power is turned off. The second thing to observe is that there is now a Hotwork safety lock hanging on the breaker keeping it in the energized state. In the case of emergency, if this power needed to be isolated, it could not be shut off.



It is understandable that Technicians manning the hole would become quite upset if someone just shut off the power on the water. From what we have heard, Karl Burger has a new nickname – "Popo". This nickname was earned due to the comparison to the largest volcano in Mexico – Popocatépetl. Apparently the eruption was significant enough to cause some concern among OCV employees about their personal safety.

In any event, *it is never appropriate to lock a breaker in the energized state*. That is not a safe solution. We always have to treat our clients respectfully and courteously – even in urgent and stressful situations.

Perhaps our energies could have been better spent in prevention of this entire incident. The picture below shows how the breaker was subsequently identified in response to the shutdown (and eruption by Popo). You can also see all the lockouts for the de-energized forming machines. The actual Hotwork breaker is now covered by a notice that says "Don't Touch" and an adjacent notice says "Don't Operate, Don't Move, Don't Interrupt, Hot Works 440v". It seems to me that we should always have a notice to contact us (Hotwork) before operating the breaker. We never know from what location the client will supply our temporary power. We have to be sure that the breaker is identified so that it isn't confused with its normal function.



The 2014 Smitty Award winner has taken his place of honor in the Hotwork lobby. Congratulations once again to Ted Drach as Hotwork Technician of the Year.



We have had a series of drain pump problems and we are working hard to understand the true root cause of some of these issues. It is critically important that we have good information about the problem. Written information on a red tag would be a good start but a firsthand report (at the time of the incident) to Ted or Larry may go a long way to improving the troubleshooting. Reinaldo Penso made me aware of a handheld instrument that can predict the rotation direction of a machine without having to bump test it. Ted Randall is working on how to utilize this instrument with our drain pumps that are sensitive to reverse rotation. Several other countermeasures are also in the works.

The weather has finally broken in Lexington and March Madness is underway. There are a few Wildcat fans around the office that seem to be feeling pretty good right now.

Tom