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Dangers of Damaged Electrical Appliances

Electric shock incident investigations recently undertaken by the Victorian Energy Safety Regulator, Energy Safe Victoria (ESV), revealed that a number of incidents have occurred due to damaged electrical appliances continuing to be used. This damage has resulted in the appliance being left in an unsafe condition.

One such recent investigation revealed that a person had damaged a washing machine at the rear of the control panel. This damage had left access to live parts of the washing machine exposed and when contact was made an electric shock was received. This situation was exacerbated by the fact the washing machine was located in the laundry, and water was present on the floor. Water and electricity is not a good combination and it is imperative that only electrical equipment in good working order be used with or in the vicinity of water.

Any damage that occurs to an electrical appliance must result in the appliance being disconnected from the electricity supply and either discarded or examined, tested and repaired by a suitably competent person. If the appliance is connected to the fixed wiring of the premises, then the equipment must be switched off at the appliance and a licensed electrician must be called to disconnect the appliance from the electricity supply.

Energy Safe Victoria also recommends that an earth leakage circuit breaker, commonly called a safety switch or residual current device (RCD), be added to older installations that may not have yet been fitted with one. Safety switches have been proven to save lives. If a damaged appliance is used, then a safety switch may help prevent an electrocution, but removing the hazard immediately it is known is the best course of action.

Further information can be obtained from Energy Safe Victoria at info@esv.gov.au, or www.esv.gov.au, or on (03) 9203 9700.

