NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

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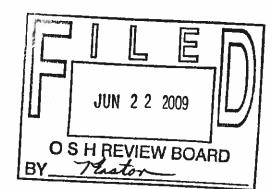
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY,

Complainant,

VS.

HANSEN MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS, INC.,

Respondent.



Docket No. LV 09-1361

DECISION

This matter having come before the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD at a hearing commenced on the 13th day of May, 2009, in furtherance of notice duly provided according to law, MR. JOHN WILES, ESQ., appearing on behalf of the Complainant, counsel Administrative Officer of the Occupational Safety and Administration, Division of Industrial Relations (OSHA); and MR. JOHN LAVERY, ESQ., appearing on behalf of Respondent, Hansen Mechanical Contractors, Inc.; the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD finds as follows:

Jurisdiction in this matter has been conferred in accordance with Nevada Revised Statute 618.315.

The complaint filed by the OSHA sets forth allegations of violation of Nevada Revised Statutes as referenced in Exhibit "A," attached thereto.

Counsel for the parties stipulated to admissibility of the evidence

in Complainant's Exhibits A and B, and Respondent's Exhibit 1.

Citation 1, Item 1(a) charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.102(a)(1). Complainant alleges the respondent employer failed to provide appropriate eye protection equipment at a work site in Las Vegas, Nevada. Employees in the immediate vicinity and helping with arc welding operations wore only safety glasses with clear lenses. The violation was classified as serious due to the potential for serious eye injury to three employees working in the vicinity of welding arc rays and cutting operations. The violation was cited as a "Repeat/Serious" violation based upon a previous violation for employee exposure to similar hazard conditions. The proposed penalty for the Repeat/Serious violation is in the amount of SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$7,500.00).

Citation 2, Item 1 charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.403(b)(2). Complainant alleges respondent employer failed to ensure equipment was installed and used in accordance with listing and labeling. Extension cord wire with the connective end components removed was "hardwired" to supply electrical power. The violation was classified as "Other" due to the degree of potential injury from exposure to electrical hazards in the event of failure of the equipment utilized contrary to the listing/labeling restrictions. The violation was cited as "Repeat" due to a previous violation for exposure to similar hazards. The proposed penalty for the Repeat/Other violation is in the amount of TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$200.00).

Citation 3, Item 1(a) charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.351(b)(4). Complainant alleges damaged electrical cables with exposed bare conductors were used in the course of welding operations in violation of the standard. The violation was classified as "Serious" due to the

exposure to possible serious injuries or death. The proposed penalty for the Serious violation is in the amount of ONE THOUSAND TWO-HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS (\$1,275.00).

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Citation 3, Item 1(b) charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.351(e). Complainant alleges the employer failed to shield arc welding and cutting operations to protect employees and other persons working in the vicinity of the direct arc rays whenever practicable. The violation was classified as Serious based upon at least two employees exposed to the potential for eye injury from the unshielded operations. The proposed penalty was grouped and included with that set forth at Citation 3, Item 1(a).

Citation 4, Item 1 charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.300(a). Complainant alleges the respondent employer failed to ensure power tools were maintained in a safe condition. A band saw was missing the ground pin. An employee was exposed to possible injuries in the event of potential use of the improperly maintained tool. The violation was classified as "Other" and the proposed penalty grouped with additional violations set forth at Citation 4.

Citation 4, Item 2(a) charges violation of 29 CFR 1926.405(a)(2)(ii)(1). Complainant alleges the respondent employer failed to ensure flexible extension cords were protected from damage. An extension cord was wired to supply power between outlet boxes and pass through an opening from the upper to the lower sections of the job box without any protection provided. Further, an extension cord used to supply power to a heavy duty portable outlet for charging batteries, passed through an opening from the upper to lower sections of the job box without any protection provided. The violation was classified as "Other" based on exposure to potential serious injuries from electrical

shock hazards. The grouped penalty was assessed at EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS (\$850.00).

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Citation 4, Item 2(b) charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.405(b)(2). Complainant alleges the employer respondent failed to insure an electrical outlet box mounted to the side of a foreman's job box was covered in accordance with the standard. The employee was exposed to possible electrical shock hazards. The violation was classified as "Other" and the penalty grouped with that set forth at Citation 4, Item 2(a).

Citation 4, Item 2(c) charges а violation of 29 CFR 1926.405(g)(2)(iv). Complainant alleges the employer failed to ensure flexible electrical extension cords were equipped with appropriate The violation was classified as "Other" due to the strain relief. potential exposure to injury. The proposed penalty was grouped with that set forth at Citation 4, Item 2(a).

Citation 4, Item 2(d) charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.416(e)(1). Complainant alleges the employer failed to prevent the use of worn or frayed electrical cords at the work site. Damaged cords were found in use in three instances; two to job boxes in use on the site and one to power a DeWalt drill. The violation was classified as "Other." Two employees and two foremen were exposed to potential electrical shock hazards by utilizing equipment which included the cord with damaged sheathing. The proposed penalty was grouped with that set forth at Citation 4, Item 2(a).

Counsel for Chief Administrative Officer presented evidence and testimony with regard to the alleged violations. Safety and Health Representative (SHR) Nicholas LaFronz testified that he conducted a comprehensive inspection of the respondent work site at the Cosmopolitan

Hotel project located in Las Vegas, Nevada commencing on or about July 8, 2008. Respondent is a Nevada employer engaged in plumbing, heating and air conditioning work. The SHR testified he observed an employee of respondent engaged in welding approximately eight feet above floor level using an arc welder and assisted by two other employees working in proximity. The welder was equipped with an appropriate safety hood device; however, the helping employees wore only safety glasses with clear lenses. Mr. LaFronz determined the helper employees eye protection to be inappropriate for protection from the work conditions observed. The SHR inquired of the helper employees whether they were provided with more protective eye protection equipment on site in furtherance of the requirements of the standard. He testified the employees could not immediately locate the appropriate protective eye wear until same were produced later by the company safety representative from a company job box. The SHR testified he saw two instances of violation; the first occurring on July 9, 2008 and then on approximately July 17, 2008. He classified the violation as a Repeat offense after finding a previous violation occurred in March of 2008 involving exposure to similar hazardous conditions.

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Mr. LaFronz identified various documentary and photographic exhibits from complainant's Exhibits A and B. He described the type of glasses he determined to be required in accordance with the tables referenced at Exhibit A, pages 33 and 34. Mr. LaFronz testified the penalty calculation was based upon the exposure to be less than life threatening, but sufficient to result in serious injury to vision. No credits were applied to the penalty proposed due to the classification as a "Repeat" offense.

Respondent counsel conducted cross-examination. SHR LaFronz

testified the welder and a helper employee wore adequate eye protection but two assisting employees were not wearing that which he determined appropriate for the subject work. Mr. LaFronz relied upon Exhibit A, pages 35 through 39 as well as his understanding of the hazardous risk exposure in determining the violations to be serious. Counsel directed Mr. LaFronz to complainant's Exhibit A, page 38 which referenced eye protection for persons in the vicinity of welding operations, including welder helpers who have an open line of sight. Mr. LaFronz acknowledged the reference at page 38 and counsel's identification of the provision which provided that persons in the vicinity should consider wearing appropriate safety equipment, such as "safety glasses . . . " Counsel further directed Mr. LaFronz to the exhibit reference for momentary viewing of arc welding, which does not exceed retinal exposure dangers, unless staring at an open arc occurs. The SHR acknowledged both exhibit references and responded that the totality of work site facts and circumstances must be considered in determining compliance. Не reaffirmed his finding there to be a violation of the standard based upon the use of only clear lens safety glasses by the helper employees. Mr. LaFronz acknowledged there was appropriate eye protection equipment on the work site as required by the standard but not immediately located by the employees when he questioned them. He testified the eye protection equipment he requested could not be produced until approximately one hour which was forty minutes from the time of his request.

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Counsel for the complainant presented further evidence and testimony from SHR LaFronz with regard to Citation 2, Item 1, involving the alleged "hardwiring" of extension cords and the use of a relocatable power tap (computer strip) in violation of the standard. He identified

photographic evidence depicting the alleged violations. Mr. LaFronz testified that both coupler ends of the extension cord had been removed and the wire portion then "hardwired" in place contrary to labeling and listing under the standard. He classified the violation as "Other" and assessed a penalty in the amount of Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00). No credits were applied based upon same being further classified as a "Repeat" due to a previous similar violation.

On cross-examination, Mr. LaFronz testified in response to counsel that it would be non violative if an extension cord male and female ends were clipped off and wire of a proper gauge used for hardwiring purposes. Mr. LaFronz admitted he was unable to confirm any test lab or other indications for the wire utilized and he did not test the wire for load capacity or find any labeling or listing indications on same.

At Citation 3, Item 1(a), Mr. LaFronz testified he observed an employee working from a step ladder while near a damaged electrical cable and exposed conductors. He referenced photographic Exhibit B, page 60, depicting the exposure and potential for serious injury should the employee come in contact with the damaged electrical cables. He notified foreman Randy Book of the hazardous conditions. Mr. Book indicated that to him someone must have run over those this morning. Mr. LaFronz classified the violation as "Serious" due to the potential for serious injury or death from electrical shock.

Complainant presented further testimony by Mr. LaFronz regarding Citation 3, Item 1(b). The SHR determined that welding operations were not shielded properly in accordance with the standard. He observed a respondent employee welder working from a ladder approximately eight feet above grade level, without protection to others from arc welding exposure. The shield screening was only approximately six feet high.

He testified there were no shields on site to protect other employees in the area. He further testified that he considered "practicability" of use based upon the terms of the standard, but determined different types of shields were readily available in the industry. Mr. LaFronz testified there was a general foreman on the site to establish employer notice of the improper use of the six foot shielding and hazard exposure accordingly.

At Citation 4, respondent counsel stipulated to violations at Items 1, 2(a), 2(c) and 2(d). Counsel for complainant presented evidence and testimony with regard to Citation 4, Item 2(b). SHR LaFronz testified he cited the employer for failure to ensure that an outlet box was equipped with a cover as required by the standard. He noted an electrical outlet mounted to the side of a foreman's job box which did not bear a cover. The outlet box was depicted in a photograph at complainant's Exhibit B. On cross-examination, SHR LaFronz testified that the electrical outlet did bear a face plate but no cover over the receptacle as demonstrated at Exhibit B, page 51. He testified that the penalties assessed at Citation 4 were grouped and classified as "Other," due principally to the lack of severity for each violation.

Counsel for respondent presented evidence and testimony through two witnesses. Ms. Merilee Burton identified herself as the mechanical safety manager for the respondent and present during the inspection. She testified as to Citation 1, Item 1 that all of the respondent employees were provided appropriate eye protection the welder was equipped with a hood, and the helper employees wore appropriate safety glasses. She testified that responsible job foremen tour the various work projects but do not remain on a particular job site for more than 20 or 30 minutes per day. Ms. Burton testified the company provides

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appropriate eye protection for all employees and locates the equipment in "gang boxes" on each of the ten floors of the construction site. Ms. Burton testified that she accompanied SHR LaFronz in his inspection of She testified that the delay in helper each of the gang boxes. employees finding the particular type welding goggles required by the SHR during the time of the inspection was due to the welding foreman not being immediately available. Ms. Burton testified that actual location of the eye protection provided by the employer as required by the SHR did not take as long as the SHR testified (one hour). She further testified that the eye wear required by Mr. LaFronz was on site in the gang boxes and located in a reasonable time. She further testified there was no violation at Citation 1, Item 1. The standard permitted use of the safety glasses worn as determined appropriate by the trained union employees. Other eye protection, including that required by the SHR was observed by she and the SHR in the employee gang boxes located on each floor of the construction site. She also testified that the gang boxes on each floor included a list on the lid of everything in the box so all employees could readily find what was included in the gang box.

Ms. Burton testified as to Citation 2, Item 1 regarding hard wiring of extension cord wire sections. She stated the wiring work had been performed by licensed electricians who work for Dyna Electric, a company associated with that of the respondent.

Ms. Burton testified as to Citation 3, Item 1(a) that the identified damaged electrical cables could have resulted from drywall and other materials being hauled by pallet jacks moving about the work area, as well as a flat car on the floor which was heavily loaded.

On cross-examination Ms. Burton testified that the potential for

employee exposure depicted in the photographs at complainant's Exhibit B, pages 14 and 15, did not require shielding because employees were not ". . in eye shot of the welding operations . . ." She further testified that respondent employees are trained to not look directly at arc flashes so safety glasses are sufficient unless employees are actually working on the welding operations and required to look at the point of arc contact. She further responded that the damaged cable issue at Citation 3, Item 1(a) must have occurred earlier that morning because employees are required to inspect the cables daily or every time they commence working with them.

Respondent presented further testimony from Ms. Sheila Beddinger, the safety director of respondent. Ms. Beddinger testified that after having received an "Other" citation in March for a different standard but based on eye exposure, special additional training and assurances were effectuated. She stated that training occurred for use of color cards to establish appropriate conditions for eye protection in particular situations and included in each employee gang box. Beddinger further testified that all employees are job safety oriented, their training is reviewed and each is tested to assure understanding. Ms. Beddinger responded to questions with regard to assurance of employee background training and understanding of the exposure to hazards involved in welding operations. She testified that all of the employees subject of the citations, including the helpers were qualified as certified welders, and trained through the union program.

At the conclusion of the hearing counsel for complainant and respondent presented closing arguments.

The complainant argued the facts established a violation at

Citation 1, Item 1 and classification as a Repeat/Serious violation. He directed reference to Exhibit B, page 14, to establish the facts of violation through the photograph depicting lack of shielding screens in place and employees exposed to the potential for eye injury. Counsel argued that use of safety glasses with #5 lenses even though employees may be trained to look away or cover their eyes, does not constitute compliance with the cited standard. Counsel further argued that at Citation 2, Item 1 an extension cord was proven to be in use although modified by cutting off the male and female ends but still prohibited by the standard. He asserted that the standard did not intend to allow soft covered extension cords to be used for hardwire application.

At Citation 3, Item 1(a) counsel argued that frayed conductor cables present a serious danger, particularly when connected to a welding machine of high voltage. The damaged cable lead near the ladder as depicted in the exhibit was egregious and constituted a condition very easy for the respondent to have observed and corrected to avoid employee exposure to electrocution. Employer knowledge was imputed by the involvement of the foreman in the subject violation.

At Citation 3, Item 1(b) counsel argued that respondent could not ignore a standard simply because height of the welding point was over six feet which is a standard size for manufactured shielding. He argued there was no evidence of impossibility of compliance or lack of practicability.

At Citation 4, Item 2(b) counsel argued the admitted photographic evidence clearly identifies the violation and speaks for itself.

Respondent counsel argued that every employee on the job site involved in the citations was safety trained as a union certified welder. He emphasized that the employer was cited for not **providing**

adequate eye protection as opposed to same not being worn on the job site. He argued the SHR and respondent safety representative both confirmed that the eye wear required by the SHR was on the job site in the gang boxes. He asserted that trained union employees wore safety glasses because they knew when to use those as opposed to a hood or other eye protection. He further argued that all employees performing welding wore appropriate welding hoods.

At Citation 2 counsel argued there is nothing in the standard that prevents use of an extension type cord if the ends are clipped off and only the wire remains. It is no longer an "extension cord" so there can be no violation of the standard. There was no evidence of testing or labeling on the subject wire submitted by the SHR to establish the capacity of the wire or listings printed on same which prevented use in a hardwiring condition.

At Citation 3, Item 1(a) counsel argued that two employees testified the cable was okay in the morning but as soon as deficiencies discovered, work was stopped and same were repaired. He further argued the employer had no notice of the deficiency, but when it did, same was promptly corrected.

At Citation 3, Item 1(b) counsel argued the evidence showed the subject welding work at an eight-foot height made it impractical for the shields on site to fully cover the operations. He noted respondent's witness, Ms. Beddinger, testified that while she personally would have put up the shields, no exposure to employees occurred under the circumstances because of surrounding walls on two sides and only trained welder employees passing by who knew how to shield their eyes but chose to wear plain safety glasses as opposed to going to the gang box and obtaining the lenses provided by the employer. He further argued that

the safety glasses worn by the employees subject of citation are recognized as acceptable eye protection in complainant's Exhibit A, page 38.

The board reviewed the evidence, testimony, standards cited, working conditions, and noted particularly the exhibits presented by both counsel.

At Citation 1, Item 1, the employer was cited for a violation of 29 CFR 1926.102(a)(1). The standard provides:

"Employees shall be **provided** with eye and face protection equipment when machines or operations present potential eye or face injury from physical, chemical, or radiation agents." (emphasis added)

Respondent witnesses testified the eye wear requested by the SHR was provided in the employee gang boxes by the employer on each of the floors of the construction project site. The testimonial evidence from both the SHR and employer safety representative was that the requested appropriate eye protection was in the gang box. Affected employees were union welders trained to understand eye hazards. The employer was not cited for maintaining other than an adequate safety program. All welders were observed by the SHR wearing protective hoods during welding operations. The helpers, who were also certified union welders, wore safety glasses at the time of the citation. OSHA did not cite the respondent for a violation of 29 CFR 1910.252 or related standard for any failure to wear appropriate personal protective equipment.

At Citation 2, Item 1, the facts and evidence did not demonstrate that actual "extension cords" were utilized in violation of the standard as cited. The undisputed facts and evidence established there were no male or female connection receptacles on the ends of the wire which was "hardwired" into the foreman job boxes as referenced in the citation at

sub-items 1 and 2. Further there were no facts of violation with regard to the power tap. The SHR did not testify, nor was there any evidence produced, to establish the lack of suitability of the wire sections to support the capacity for the applied use. The wire was no longer an "extension cord" once the ends were removed and wire sections then hardwired in place. There was no evidence or testimony of any "listing or labeling" on the wire to establish lack of load capacity, restrictions, or prohibited use of the wire without the end receptacles attached.

At Citation 3, Item 1(a), the facts and photographic exhibits clearly demonstrate a bare conductor in close proximity of a ladder utilized by an employee of respondent. There was no sworn testimony that the cord was inspected in the morning to support a purported foreman's comment that the damaged cord must have been recently "run over" and damaged in the morning after an inspection. The evidence further demonstrated that pallet jacks and/or other heavy equipment that might have been the cause of damage to the cords were not in use at the vicinity of the cited damaged cord, but rather operated in a different section of the work site.

At Citation 3, Item 1(b), the standard cited provides in pertinent part:

"Shielding. Whenever practicable, all arc welding and cutting operations shall be shielded by noncombustible or flameproof screens which will protect employees and other persons working in the vicinity from the direct rays of the arc." (emphasis added)

From the photographs in evidence, testimony describing the work tasks, and the non steel erection nature of the business conducted by the respondent employer, it appeared the welding portion of the employee

work involved less time devoted to welding than hanging and installation of metal pipe. The SHR testimony was speculative that special sized shielding could be located on the internet and readily purchased. testimony was that any shields on site were a height of six feet but the work underway required welding a particular pipe in place at a height of over six feet. Pictorial evidence and credible testimony reflected six foot shielding was on the work site. The photographic depiction of the cited work performed by trained certified welder employees demonstrated the welder using a hood, and helpers wearing safety glasses and/or using their hand to avoid the arc rays. Complainant's Exhibit A, page 38, confirmed that the helper employees could be sufficiently protected by safety glasses under appropriate circumstances. photographs depicted a work site and task reasonably showing a lack of practicability to erecting specialty shielding in a configuration where actual welding work may have been brief or secondary to the overall work task.

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At Citation 4, the board confirmed the stipulation of counsel for admission of violations of Items 1, 2(a), 2(c) and 2(d). The board in examining the pictorial exhibit as to Citation 4, Item 2(b), found insufficient facts to support violation of the cited standard. The electrical box depicted in the photographs was covered with a "face plate" to prevent contact with any bare wiring around the receptacle. The lack of a cover over the electrical box and face plate is not violative of the standard.

In all proceedings commenced by the filing of a notice of contest, the burden of proof rests with the Administrator. N.A.C. 618.788(1).

All facts forming the basis of a complaint must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. Armor Elevator Co., 1 OSHC 1409, 1973-1974 OSHD ¶16,958

(1973).

To prove a violation of a standard, the Secretary must establish (1) the applicability of the standard, (2) the existence of noncomplying conditions, (3) employee exposure or access, and (4) that the employer knew or with the exercise of reasonable diligence could have known of the violative condition. See Belger Cartage Service, Inc., 79 OSAHRC 16/B4, 7 BNA OSHC 1233, 1235, 1979 CCH OSHD ¶23,400, p.28,373 (No. 76-1948, 1979); Harvey Workover, Inc., 79 OSAHRC 72/D5, 7 BNA OSHC 1687, 1688-90, 1979 CCH OSHD 23,830, pp. 28,908-10 (No. 76-1408, 1979); American Wrecking Corp. v. Secretary of Labor, 351 F.3d 1254, 1261 (D.C. Cir. 2003).

A respondent may rebut allegations by showing:

- That the standard was inapplicable to the situation at issue;
- 2. That the situation was in compliance; or lack of access to a hazard. See, Anning-Johnson Co., 4 OSHC 1193, 1975-1976 OSHD ¶ 20,690 (1976).

A "serious" violation is established in accordance with NRS 618.625(2) which provides in pertinent part:

employment if there is a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a condition which exists or from one or more practices, means, methods, operations or processes which have been adopted or are in use at that place of employment unless the employer did not and could not, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, know the presence of the violation.

Based upon the above and foregoing, it is the decision of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD that no violation of Nevada Revised Statutes did occur as to Citation 1, Item 1, Citation 2, Item 2, Citation 3, Item 1(b) and Citation 4, Item 2(b). The violations charged are hereby dismissed and the assessed penalties associated with same denied.

It is the further decision of the Board that violations did occur

as to Citation 3, Item 1(a) and Citation 4, Item 1, 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 2(d). The assessed grouped penalty in the total amount of TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FIVE DOLLARS (\$2,125.00) is confirmed.

The Board directs counsel for the Respondent to submit proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD and serve copies on opposing counsel within twenty (20) days from date of decision. After five (5) days time for filing any objection, the final Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law shall be submitted to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD by prevailing counsel. Service of the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law signed by the Chairman of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD shall constitute the Final Order of the BOARD.

DATED: This $\frac{22nd}{}$ day of June, 2009.

NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

By /s/
JOHN SEYMOUR, Chairman