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INCIDENT ALERT

An electrician’s apprentice was tasked with installing overhead Unistrut conduit hangers. He was tasked with attaching sections of Unistrut to overhead imbedded allthread. His work process was to work from a scissors lift, position the Unistrut, then thread nuts onto the allthread to hold it in place. He would then tighten a lock nut on top of the allthread, using an adjustable jaws wrench. In order to keep the unistrut bracket in position he would hold it with his left hand while he tightened the locknut with his right. At one location he was applying torque to the nut the wrench slipped off. The counterpressure with his left hand forced the Unistrut into his forehead above his right eye, resulting in a laceration. He reported the injury to his supervisor and was transported to a nearby medical facility where he received stitches and was released to return to work.

LESSONS LEARNED

Several issues were identified during the incident investigation. First, the worker was using an adjustable jaw type wrench. These can easily loosen when in use and may have contributed to the wrench slipping. A fixed jaw open end wrench might have been a better choice. Second, the worker had positioned himself so his face was in direct line with the work piece. Had he positioned himself so the work was at or below shoulder level he would have been able to exert more control over the work and may have been better able to prevent the strut from moving. Third, the worker was using quite a bit of force when tightening the locknubs. This amount of force may not have been necessary since the purpose of the locknut is to bind the bracket in place. Using less force would have allowed the worker to better control the piece with his off hand when the wrench slipped.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about how tool use and selection is discussed during the task planning process. Ask how the best practice of positioning work within the “power zone” (between shoulder and waist level) is reinforced.

2. Watch for activities that may result in similar injuries during your walk through. Are workers positioning themselves where they may be struck or injured in the event of a tool slipping or failing? Are they using the best tool for the job? Have they developed a task plan for their work that addresses these hazards?

3. Encourage your contractors to share and discuss this incident alert with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff

REV. (DATE)