

Using Torch Near Gas Line Is Last Straw for Electrician on Probation for Safety



A journeyman electrician with 25 years of service used a propane torch to make electrical repairs. It was a curious decision considering the gas line running the length of the pit in which he was working. The electrician vigorously denied responsibility for the ensuing explosion and claimed the gas line ruptured spontaneously. But the company didn't buy it. And since the electrician was already working under a Last Chance Agreement for repeated safety offences, termination seemed a no-brainer. The arbitrator thought so too. Spontaneous rupture, my behind; all things pointed to use of the torch as causing the explosion, the arbitrator reasoned. And the electrician's questionable safety record and seemingly cavalier attitude ('I didn't see the gas as a huge threat. We've worked around it forever,' he testified) cancelled out the deference normally due a journeyman's professional judgment in selecting repair methods [*Toronto Hydro v Power Workers Union*, 2017 CanLII 64553 (ON LA), Oct 2, 2017].