



Laboratory Safety Committee

**Electrical Safety Subcommittee**

Updated: 12-1-09

### **ESS D2006-3 06-Mar-2006**

#### **Does a Person Need to be “Qualified” to Operate a Circuit Breaker?**

Jim Garvey asked if one needed to be classified as a “Qualified Worker” in order to operate a circuit breaker. He cited many instances of area lighting being controlled by a panelboard circuit breaker (ideally switch duty rated) rather than by a normal wall light switch. NFPA 70E considers the operation of such a circuit breaker as having a Hazard/Risk Category of 0 with attendant PPE requirements of non-melting or untreated natural fiber long-sleeve shirt, long pants and safety glasses.

The conclusion here is that, indeed, the individual operating the circuit breaker would have to be a “qualified worker” to be in conformance with the requirements of NFPA 70E. However, the training required to perform such an operation is minimal. In particular here, the individual should be aware of the hazards associated with operating a circuit breaker as well as the attendant PPE requirements. If the individual’s electrical work activities are limited to such having very low risk, a requirement to have the individual take full NFPA 70E training impresses the ESS as unreasonable. Informing the individual verbally of the associated hazards and PPE requirements is considered sufficient training to bring the individual to “qualified” status for this indicated activity.