

Case 3**Re:** Melanie I**Date of Injury:** 8/6/07

While working at a carnival, Melanie was asked to place some flags up around the perimeter of the Hotdog Palace. She stood on a bucket, in the back of a truck, to reach the flag locations. Unbeknownst to her, there was open electrical near where she was placing the flags. She touched a metal latch and was shocked severely, and when she was able to release her hand, thrown across the truck bed. She was transported by private car to the ER and was hospitalized. She had suffered a severe electric shock and full thickness burns to the right first and middle fingers. Her entrance wounds were to her two fingers. Her exit wounds were at her left foot, between her second and third toe and between her third and fourth toe.

In the hospital, her EKG and electrolytes remained normal. Her exit wounds healed without complications.

She was unhappy with her employer for transporting her by car and not calling 911. She felt as if no one was telling her what was going on in the hospital. She was discharged after three days.

What impact of not calling 911 for the employee?

Why do you think it was important that her EKG and electrolytes were normal in an electric shock?

After discharge, she participated in hand therapy for several months, which included physical therapy and pain medications.

In addition, she had back spasms, from her neck to her lumbar spine, that were treated.

She began to suffer from depression. She missed a semester of school, had to move in with her parents, and had recurrent nightmares and crying spells.

What additional diagnoses might she have?

What could be done by the following to help the worker?

Claims adjuster?

Doctor?

Employer?

She was seen for a medical arbiter exam in Fall 2008. While describing the severe shock, she was tearful when recalling the event. She stated she had many nightmares immediately after the event. Now, she has them occasionally. When she plugs a plug into an electrical outlet and it sparks, it causes her to recall the injury as “if it were a picture book”.

On inspection, she has four healed wounds, one on her right index and three on her right middle finger. The skin of the healed wounds appeared thin. On palpation, she had increased pain at her injury sites. She had slightly decreased ranges of motion of her two affected fingers. On full extension, she has mild rotational deformity of her middle finger. On active flexion, she has lateral deviation at her middle finger from wound contracting while healing. Sensation was intact.

Her range of motion for her back was normal.

What is the difference between impairment and disability?

Is she permanently impaired?