

15 July 2015

General Assistants in Schools Bulletin Resetting tripped circuit breakers - development of a standard operating procedure

PSA Industrial Staff and the Chair of the General Assistants Advisory Group (GAAG) met with the Department on Tuesday, 30 June 2015 to discuss standard operating procedure where circuit breakers are tripped in schools.

Any activity involving electricity needs to be handled with care and diligence to ensure the safety of staff at workplaces. Schools are no different and, as there are school students involved, the duty of care of staff and the Department of students is a primary concern.

The PSA put that there are inherent dangers involved in General Assistants resetting tripped circuit breakers and the Department shares the union's concerns. In several cases, qualified electricians have expressed concern when they have been called out to schools to assist in re-setting tripped circuit breakers.

The Department has agreed to provide a draft standard operating procedure for these events so that General Assistants (and other school staff) are aware of the requirements to ensure workplace health and safety in schools.

The next GAAG meets in August 2015. The PSA is hopeful that the Department will supply a draft standard operating procedure on resetting tripped circuit breakers in schools prior to the meeting.

The current PSA position is that the re-setting of tripped circuit breakers is covered under the schools maintenance contract and is not covered by the

GA's statement of duties. Being on site, the union understands that GAs may wish to assist their school if it is impeded by a power loss due to an overloaded circuit.

In the absence of a standard operating procedure GAs who volunteer to exercise their goodwill are urged to exercise caution when it comes to resetting tripped circuit breakers.

Correspondence to the Department on various GA industrial issues

The GAAG has raised a number of industrial issues via the PSA with the Department. Correspondence has been exchanged. The five broad issues raised by the PSA are:

- GAs being directed to undertake work outside school boundaries
- Business Managers supervising GAs
- Usage of personal vehicles – insurance/ registration
- Safety Alert 45 – working alone
- Technological change

While the Department has provided some guarantees and assurances around some aspects of the issues raised, the response is less than satisfactory from the perspective of PSA members. A further letter has been sent to the Department seeking additional clarification.

The PSA will keep members informed on future developments in these issues.

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