**The Left-Hand Rule for Closing a Circuit Breaker**

When a circuit breaker trips, it shuts off the current flow and thus, protects the circuit from overheating and causing damage--possibly even a fire. Prior to reclosing a breaker, all workers must have the know-how to determine the cause of the trip.

Let’s look at 29 CFR 1910.334(b) (2), *Reclosing circuits after protective device operation*. After a circuit is de-energized by a circuit protective device, the circuit may not be manually reenergized ***until*** it has been determined that the equipment and circuit can be safely energized. The repetitive manual reclosing of circuit breakers or re-energizing circuits through replaced fuses is *prohibited*. Educating personnel who operate switches per best-practice is an acceptable way to meet this requirement.

A breaker that trips immediately after it’s reset is telling you that there's still an electrical problem. There are 3 typical causes for a breaker to trip, they are:

* An Overloaded Circuit
* A Short Circuit
* Or a Ground Fault

Circuit overloading is the most common reason a circuit breaker trips. The tripping means you’re running too many power consuming devices at the same time on the same circuit.

A short circuit is the next possible (and more dangerous) cause of a trip. A short circuit happens when a “hot” wire touches another hot wire or touches a “neutral” wire in one of your outlets. When these two wires touch, a large amount of current flows, creating more heat than the circuit can handle, so it shuts off.

A ground fault, which is similar to a short circuit, happens when a hot wire touches the ground wire (bare copper) or the side of a metal outlet box which is connected to the ground wire.

**How to do it safely:**

When you operate *any type of switch*, recognize there is nothing more than a thin metal door between you and *as much energy as the system can supply*. So; it makes sense to do it in the safest manner possible, or you'll get, permanently disabled....maybe worse. Some people simply do not recognize the potential danger to themselves when performing the relatively simple act of closing a breaker. The safest way is to use what the Old-timers called the *Left Hand Rule*; it has 131 years of empirical evidence showing that it works

**The Left--Hand Rule** is: 1. Stand to the right of the equipment, (out of the line of fire) 2. Grab the handle with your left hand, 3.Take a deep breath and hold it, 4. Face away, close your eyes: and 5. Very forcibly operate it either on or off in a swift, decisive movement, with no hesitation.

To prevent almost all risk of injury in the event of an equipment failure, you can add the right PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). Put on your rubber gloves and leathers (they give great arc flash protection), protect yours body with FR clothing, put on your face shield and follow the Left-hand rule; with no part of your body in front of that door. This may be excessive, but if it arcs - better to be over protected! While any High-Voltage equipment switching is being operated; no person should be present in the (prohibited) Boundary Zone without appropriate PPE.