

# Connections

- *Looking for a new job inside Square D*
- *You don't always have to be in sales to sell Square D*
- *Learn to think better*
- *Keeping the home fires from burning in England*

*Help on the way:  
a hospital loses its power*



Richard Derk, Chicago

A hospital lost its power and chartered a plane to bring technical service representative Neil Volk to an all-night rescue operation. Page 2

**SQUARE D®**







# The night the lights went out

*A hospital loses its power—and Square D people energize for a successful operation*

**Thursday, 5 a.m.** *Neil Volk stared at the ceiling of a motel room in Charleston, South Carolina.*

*"I was wired," says the 32-year-old technical service representative.*

*"I hadn't slept in 24 hours. I had spent the past 10 hours trying to restore normal power for a 400-bed hospital. I lay there retracing every step in my mind. I had two hours to wait before I could make the final move."*

It was just before 1:30 Wednesday afternoon. An electrician was making some detailed adjustments to the switchboard at Roper Hospital in Charleston. Suddenly, a tool slipped out of his hand into the 480-volt busway.

The explosion blew the switchboard. Lights flickered in corridors and operating rooms as the four emergency generators took over. The electrician was rushed for treatment of flash burns. (His safety glasses and gloves had protected him from more serious injury.)

The hospital plant director

called Elizabeth Heywood, senior inside salesperson at the Square D field office in Charleston. She took down the factory order number stamped on the switchgear and called applications engineer Doug Moore at the Atlanta assembly plant.

Moore quickly figured out that the switchgear had been produced in

**"I was wired. I hadn't slept in 24 hours."**

Middletown, Ohio. At 3:30 in the afternoon, Heywood reached Neil Volk in Middletown.

Volk was finishing his day with a little paperwork—or so he thought. Two hours later, he was boarding a chartered twin-engine plane for Charleston.

As the plane leveled off, Volk took out the plans for the equipment he was expected to fix. But they were the wrong plans. (He later found out

the cause of the mix-up. The hospital had asked that their purchase order number go on the custom-designed equipment—rather than the usual factory order number.)

"It was an oddball piece of equipment and I was going in blind," Volk says. "Good documentation, drawings and plans are the best tools we have. They have to be so clear that any basic electrician could figure them out."

On landing in Charleston, Volk was hauled from the plane and into a van. "The driver lay on the horn and drove 100 miles an hour across town—without a police escort," Volk says with a shudder.

At the hospital, the crisis was mounting. The emergency generators had never before been run for more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time. By now, they had been powering the hospital for more than seven hours.

When Volk arrived in the engine room, heat from the screaming generators and glaring emergency lights had raised the temperature to more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Eleven people—including Mike Barefield, Bill Oakley and Tim

*continued*

**When a hospital's switchgear exploded, Neil Volk flew by chartered plane and worked through the night to restore normal power.**



Richard Derk, Chicago

## The night the lights went out

*continued*

Ellis from the Charleston field office—were there. The charter pilot stood by, ready to fly out in case parts were needed. Seventeen hospital maintenance people spent the night in hospital beds. Utility company representatives slept in their trucks.

Volk worked through the night. By 3:30 in the morning, he was running on sheer adrenaline.

By 5 a.m., the damaged area was repaired. But Volk couldn't attempt the return to normal power until enough people were on duty to help the patients in case anything went wrong.

He went to a motel and stared at the ceiling for two hours. At 7 a.m., Volk returned to the hospital to throw the switch. The emergency system had been powering the hospital for eighteen-and-a-half hours. He prayed that his repair job would work.

"It worked," he says simply.

"You should have heard the cheers," said the hospital electrical supervisor. □

One of Square D's many technical service representatives, Volk has made repair and maintenance calls from Canada to Puerto Rico. Technical service reps may spend as many as one-third of their nights on the road.