

ACCIDENT ALERT

Accident March 12, 2010 - Victim Received an Electrical Shock while working on a live gate.

On March 12, 2010, an accident occurred when an apprentice lineman made contact with the overhead power line while working to place "Bird Guard Equipment" on the overhead power lines associated with numerous older power poles. The accident occurred while the employee was attempting to place a locking pin into a part of the bird guard called the "break out" located on top of a gate or door. The employee did not kill the power to the gate prior to installing the break out. The employee was using a lineman's belt with a safety strap and lineman's gaffs to climb the pole to work. The employee placed himself between the natural ground line and the drop power line to perform his task.

According to the witnesses the employee had dropped his protective work glove for his right hand and was told repeatedly to put his protective glove back on by his co-worker on the ground at the bottom of the pole. The victim responded negatively to the request. Apparently the victim did not realize his gaff was too close to the natural ground line and as he went to push the locking pin into place the electricity flowed into his right hand and through his body and exited his left foot into the ground. The co-worker heard a loud pop looked up and observed a bright flash and a ball of fire where the victim was positioned on the pole. A moment later the co-worker observed the victim hanging from his safety belt. Acting quickly now the co-workers on the ground began rescue operations, one rescuer went to get a large bucket truck and one called 911. The victim was taken off the pole and tended to while they waited for the emergency services to arrive. Fortunately the employee survived the injuries.

During the interviews with witnesses and employer's representative, it was determined that the employer has a written and implemented Health and Safety Program. In addition, the employer provided lineman's training to the victim. The training provided to the employee included pole climbing, Hot Work and numerous hours of lineman training in addition to many hours of field experience.

Significant Factors

- The employee had been trained in all aspects of working with powerlines.
- The employee did not kill the power to the line he was to work on prior to installing the bird protection.
- The employee did not discuss a work plan for this particular situation with the job foreman as required.
- The employee did not use the proper protection while working with hot power lines.
- The Foreman did not make victim get the proper protection on or disconnect the power before working on it.

Recommendations

- Brief all employees about the incident and point out what happens when safety is taken for granted.
- Reinforce company policy pertaining to employee's duties to avoid hazards.
- Ensure all employees are trained to recognize the hazards applicable to their job/task.
- All employees should be trained on constantly assessing the operation for safety hazards.
- Employees on-site should be given the authority to stop a procedure or task that is unsafe.
- Management should conduct routine audits periodically to ensure job safety.