Don’t Let This Be You – Electrical Safety

A crew of four linemen were installing intermediate poles on an existing single phase 14.4 KV distribution line. Three of the workers were journeymen with 30 or more years of experience. The fourth was an apprentice with almost 3 years experience. The following summary describes a tragic accident:

· One of the journeymen and the apprentice were belted off below the neutral bracket on a newly installed pole, using hot sticks to tie off the energized conductor. Another journeymen on the ground was using a hold-down to keep the conductor in place while the wraplock tie was installed.

· After asking the apprentice to move to the other side of the pole, the journeyman on the pole began to make the first wrap on the conductor. But he began this before the apprentice was fully in place and had secured the wrap with a hot stick.

· The unsecured conductor rolled out of the insulator, fell, and contacted the journeyman's left wrist. Trying to catch his balance, his right arm contacted either the neutral bracket or the pole. As a result of the current flowing through his body, the journeyman lost his left arm and suffered severe burns over his back and right arm. He will never work as an electrician again.

Findings of the IBEW investigating committee:
1. The primary emphasis was on production not on safety.
2. There had been no communication with the utility or employer.
3. The neutral conductor was in the primary zone instead of being tagged down and out.
4. No clearance from the Utility to work on energized primary, the day of the accident.
5. Workers did not place the oil circuit reclosure into the non-reclose position.
6. The wire was not held in place with hot sticks while making hot tie.
7. The foreman did not wait for the apprentice to get back on wire after changing his position on the pole.

Safety Committee Recommendations:
1. Obtain clearance from Utility prior to commencement of hot work.
2. Place circuit reclosures on "non-reclose" prior to commencing work.
3. Leave grounds and neutrals out of the work area. If not possible, cover them.
4. Maintain positive control of energized conductors at all times, with appropriate tools.
5. Plan ahead and discuss all moves with your pole partner before commencing work.
6. Maintain good communication with the utility and the employer.
7. Keep current on pole-top rescue and all safe practices.