

Fatality Narrative

Journeyman Telecommunications Technician Electrocuted After Contacting Overhead Power Line

Industry: Electrical contractors.

Occupation: Journeyman telecommunications technician.

Task: Installing fiber optic lines on joint-use poles.

Type of Incident: Electrocution.

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On May 21, 2007, a journeyman telecommunications technician was electrocuted after contacting an overhead power line. The 27-year-old victim, a member of the IBEW local, worked for a company that installs cable, telephone, and fiber optic lines. The victim and another worker were at a job site at an amusement park working from the bucket of an elevating aerial lift to install fiber optic lines on an existing cable run on a joint-use pole. A 7.2 kV high voltage power line was located above them on the pole. The victim was operating the controls to position the bucket over the tops of fir trees that had been trimmed so as not to interfere with the power lines. Both workers were looking down at the trees when both the co-worker and the victim simultaneously made contact with the overhead power line. The lift was **not** an insulated lift. The victim died at the scene and the co-worker was hospitalized with electrical burn injuries.



Photo: The incident scene

Requirements and Recommendations

(* Indicates items required by code)

- * Train all employees who are required to work near overhead power lines to recognize the hazard of electrocution.
- * Train employees in the precautions and work practices necessary to safely work near overhead power lines.
- * Use an aerial lift with an insulated bucket if there is any possibility of an exposure to overhead power lines. Insulated buckets protect from electrocution due to electric current passing through the worker and the lift to ground, but, an insulated bucket does **not** protect if there's another path to ground – for instance, if contact is made with another wire.
- * Employers are responsible for ensuring that telecommunication workers, working on joint-use poles, do not get near, or take any conductive objects near electrically energized overhead power lines unless:
 - i) The employee is insulated or guarded from the energized parts (insulating gloves rated for the voltage involved shall be considered adequate insulation), or
 - (ii) The energized parts are insulated or guarded from the employee and any other conductive object, or
 - (iii) The power conductors and equipment are de-energized and grounded.
- * Telecommunication employees shall never work in the pole space on jointly used poles between normal primary and secondary attachments.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 27th out of 77 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2007, and was the 6th out of 16 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. The information in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.*

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