

Working Near Electrical Power Lines

Accidental contact with power lines can cause serious injury and death to agricultural workers. That's because the flow of electricity through the body can burn, and is potentially lethal.

Many overhead power lines lack protective insulation. Any physical or equipment contact with them can pose danger.

TRUE STORY

While pruning walnut trees in an orchard, a pruner was using a cherry picker. At the edge of the orchard, high voltage power lines crossed over a row of trees just above the treetops. The power company usually trimmed these trees upon request. But the pruner took it upon himself to prune the trees.

After he raised the cherry picker's engaged platform to the treetop, his pruning shears touched the power line and he was electrocuted. A nearby co-worker called the power company and the fire department. The rescue team determined that the high voltage line burned over 95% of the pruner's body. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

What could have prevented this accident?

- Prohibit employees from working around electrical power lines.
- Develop rules and regulations whenever employees work in an orchard that has overhead electrical power lines.

Work Safely Near Electric Power Lines

- Realize that non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, rope, straw and hay can conduct electricity.
- Use caution when moving equipment or objects near overhead power lines. If possible, get someone to guide you.
- Understand the basic principles of electricity. If you have questions about working around electricity, ask your supervisor.
- Drive under power lines only after you confirm there is safe clearance, and your equipment is in the low position.

In case of a power line contact emergency:

Disconnect the power source and call for emergency help. If equipment makes contact with a power line, stay on the piece of equipment unless you can jump clear. Do not touch any piece of equipment that has made contact with any power lines.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

- Survey the farm and all jobsites to note location of all overhead power lines. Alert employees of these lines.
- Train employees to turn off or disconnect power sources safely.
- Never let employees work near electrical power lines. Supervise operators of tall equipment who work with equipment under power lines.
- Contact the power company before digging near underground utilities.
- Train employees on proper procedures if their equipment makes contact with a high-powered line.

Employee:

- Never touch power lines with tools or irrigation pipe.
- Never attempt to move or relocate fallen electrical wires.
- Never lift power lines by hand. Never use lumber or farm tools to move high loads as you move underneath power lines.
- Never raise ladders, poles or irrigation pipes near electrical power lines.
- Never attempt to prune branches that come in contact with and/or are near power lines.
- Never use aluminum pole pruning saws.
- Never touch or stand close to equipment or a load that has come in contact with power lines.
- Contact a supervisor before you dig near or around an underground power line.
- Never attempt to rescue a person in contact with live wires or equipment that touches power lines.
- Never place ladders within 10 feet of power lines when harvesting or pruning orchard trees.
- Check for adequate clearance when moving tall equipment under power lines.

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