OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Electrical Safety – Stay Aware of Overhead Power Lines

[Reference 1910 Subpart S / 1926 Subpart K]

Many accidental electrocutions occur even though the victim was paying close attention to potential electrical hazards located right in front of them; that is because they failed to pay attention to electrical power lines located right above them! Overhead electrical power lines are often uninsulated, which means that when a person makes contact with the overhead line either directly or while handling something conductive, electricity could flow to and through that person to ground, causing them to be electrocuted. Here are just a few examples of tasks commonly being performed while a worker gets electrocuted when they make accidental contact with an overhead power line:

- Moving a portable metal ladder from one location to another while carrying it upright;
- Rolling a metal scaffold from one location to another;
- Lifting a load with a forklift into an overhead power line, or driving into an overhead line with an elevated load;
- Raising, swinging, or driving an elevated boom-lift, bucket-lift, or scissor-lift into an overhead line located nearby;
- Swinging or raising a load suspended from a crane into an overhead line;
- Making inadvertent contact with a power line while using a tool such as a paint roller that is attached to a long metal pole;
- Handling conductive material, such as metal roof or siding panels, a section of aluminum gutter, or strips of metal flashing during construction or demo while working near a power line located above or adjacent to the structure; and,
- Raising or driving a dump truck or similar vehicle with the bed elevated while located under or near an overhead power line.

The hazardous situations we just reviewed may all sound obvious to us right now, but it is easy to forget about them as we perform our work. That is because we sometimes tend to focus on hazards located in front or beside us, but not those located right over us! So each and every time you prepare to perform one of these tasks or something similar, take a moment to first look up and survey the area directly over your head and above where you will be moving to identify overhead electrical power lines. If in doubt if the line is an energized electrical line, assume it is, and then check with your supervisor or safety representative. And always maintain a minimum of 10 feet clearance between overhead electrical lines and yourself, any conductive materials you are handing, or any equipment you are operating. Finally, be aware that in the presence of overhead lines that are ultra-high voltage, we may be instructed to stay even further away to avoid arcing of the electrical current.

Can anyone think of another task we perform where someone could make inadvertent contact with an overhead power line? Thank you for attending today's OSHA training toolbox talk. Please be sure to sign your name on the training certification form so you will get credit for being here today.

OSHA SAFETY TRAINING CERTIFICATION FORM

Toolbox Topic Covered: Basic Electrical Safety – Stay Aware of Overhead Electrical Lines

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Training led by: _____

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