



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Setting Poles Safety Message

This is an old incident; however, December 21, 2023 there was a contact in Indianapolis. Not exactly the same but similar:

Apprentice Lineman Electrocuted While Setting Utility Pole

SUMMARY

A 34-year-old male apprentice lineman (the victim) was electrocuted while assisting a co-worker in setting a wooden utility pole. The pole had been raised between two phases of a 34,500-volt overhead powerline and the victim was helping set the pole by steadying the butt over the hole. The victim slipped on the wet ground and his unprotected upper body fell against the pole while the top of the pole contacted one phase of the powerline (19,900-volt phase to ground). The victim was wearing rubber gloves as required by company policy. The wet connections allowed the current to travel down the pole, entering the victim's chest and exiting to ground through the victim's right elbow. The victim raised up, stepped back from the pole, and collapsed to the ground. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation was initiated immediately by the co-worker and a passing emergency medical technician; however, efforts to revive the victim were unsuccessful.

NIOSH (National Institute Occupational Safety Health)

Investigators concluded that, to prevent similar occurrences, employers and utility companies should:

- Consider de-energizing overhead powerlines when erecting replacement poles within existing powerline installations
- Consider the use of redundant methods of protection when erecting replacement utility poles within existing energized overhead powerline installations
- Ensure that, during pre-work site surveys, particular consideration is given to the hazards presented by existing environmental conditions and that additional control measures are implemented.

In addition, manufacturers of powerline maintenance equipment should:

- Explore equipment designs which would allow complete "hands-off" erection of utility poles.

ACTION ITEM:

Review company policies when setting poles in or around Transmission & Distribution