Crane Contacts High Tension Wires

Early in the evening an operator of a crane was installing storm sewer pipes. Suddenly, the boom of the crane contacted the overhead high tension wires. A pipe layer who was guiding the pipe as it was being lowered suddenly collapsed to the ground. Unaware of the reason for his co-worker's collapse, the crane operator climbed down from his equipment to provide assistance. He then came in contact with the ground while still touching his machine. Both men died of electrocution.

Several things could have prevented this tragic double death. A "tailgate" or "tool box" safety meeting just prior to starting the job could have been used to review the proper procedures for operating near power lines. A signaler or spotter should have been assigned solely to direct the crane operator. That person could have warned the crane operator away from the overhead lines, thereby avoiding the whole tragic scenario.

The foreman – who was doing double duty as a spotter – should not have left the scene. The crane operator should not have moved his boom without the signaler's direction. If the operator had known that he was in contact with the power lines, he probably wouldn't have left his machine.

Touching both the machine and the ground, when in contact with electricity, will result in electrical shock.