Crane Touches Overhead Line



A swamper working for his second day on a highway construction project was electrocuted when a crane touched an overhead power line. The crane was being used to remove one-ton cement barriers from the edge of the highway so that the highway could be resurfaced.

The crane operator and swamper were aware of the overhead power lines and had moved several barriers without incident. The victim’s job required him to be at the roadside to guide the lifting crane and hook-up assembly. As the work progressed, the crane moved into an area which was congested by paving equipment and highway traffic. The crane operator spoke to his supervisor about the distractions and heavy traffic, and the supervisor suggested that he take a lunch break. However, the crane operator and the victim decided to move a couple of more barriers before they stopped for lunch. The overhead power lines were forgotten for a moment. The victim apparently grabbed the hoisting device to guide it into place when the boom touched the power line. The victim collapsed. The crane operator, unaware of the contact with the power line, jumped from the truck to the ground. There he saw the front tire on the crane unit blow and he could see sparking and arcing between the truck and the ground. The machine became engulfed in flames before the fuse on the power line blew. Rescuers were unable to revive the victim.

It appears that the type of equipment and procedures used for this job put the workers in constant danger of contact with the power lines. Written procedures, safety training, the correct equipment and the right Personal Protective Equipment are important for anyone who works around power lines.

Remember about this hazard off the job as well. Even contact between a household ladder and a domestic power line can be fatal.