Painter Safety Fatality File

Painter Electrocuted by Fluorescent Light

A 49-year-old man was electrocuted when he leaned on a fluorescent light fixture while painting.

The victim was painting steel “I” beams located about 12 feet (3.7 meters) above the floor. Numerous pipes, conduits and 110-volt light fixtures were in the area. In order to reach the beam, the victim was standing on a ladder, leaning across a conduit and one of the light fixtures. He died after electrical current traveled from the energized housing through the victim’s chest and out through the victim’s right arm, which was in contact with pipes and conduits connected to the ground.

To stay safe, workers must learn the basics of electrical energy. Leaning on the fixture put stress on it, causing the wires which were not properly secured or protected where they entered the fixture—to contact the housing. The victim also created the potential for electrocution by providing a “path to ground” by contacting the fixture and the overhead pipes. It was made worse since it was very hot and the man was sweating, increasing the effect of the current. This tragedy could have been prevented. Be aware of and report hazards where you work.