Steel Walkway Contacts 14,400 Volts



A worker attaching wire rope slings to a walkway was electrocuted when a crane operator swung the main boom of the crane over a walkway.

The 56 foot steel walkway was to be used for access to a marine float. When the crane operator had swung the main boom over the walkway, the main lifting line contacted an overhead primary power line, which carried 14,400 volts. The contact energized the lifting line, slings, crane and walkway. One of the workers who was holding a sling cable was electrocuted.

A co-worker heard the victim groan and saw him clutching the sling to his chest. He saw electrical sparks coming off the slings hanging over the steel railings of the walkway. Looking up, he saw the lifting line had contacted the power line. Two co-workers were unhurt: the foreman because he was insulated by the wooden decking on the steel walkway, and the crane operator who was protected because of the non-conductive rubber tires on the crane.

Later investigation disclosed burn marks which traced the path of the electricity from where the lifting line touched the power line, the wire rope slings touched the walkway, and the walkway touched the ground.

The power company was not informed of this job ahead of time. Whenever you plan to work near a power line, contact the power authority so power can be shut off or the lines guarded. You can also discuss safety precautions. When it is not possible to shut off power, use a “spotter” to warn the operator of the proximity of overhead wires. Always keep the maximum safe distance away from energized power lines. Know and understand your “limits of approach.” Electrocutions involving power lines and equipment such as cranes, poles, pipes and ladders are all too common.