Worker’s Second Shock Proves Deadly

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A young worker who had been hospitalized for electric shock in a similar incident just three months earlier died when the machine he was operating came in contact with a 14,000-volt power line.

The 23-year-old victim was working for a company that installed highway guardrails when the incident occurred. His job was to operate a hydraulically powered guardrail post pounder mounted on a stake truck and to use control levers located at the operator station on the outside of the truck to extend the steel boom and pound posts into place.

At the time of the incident the boom was extended upward about one foot above the power line. No one witnessed the event. However, it is believed the boom made contact with the overhead power line. Co-workers remember hearing a crackling sound and looking towards the truck where they saw the victim lying on the ground. He was declared dead at the scene.

Dangers associated with overhead power lines might appear to be obvious. However, contact with power lines and the subsequent occupational-related fatalities continue. To protect themselves workers must ensure jobsite hazard assessments have been conducted and confirm that all overhead and underground lines have been properly marked. Wear appropriate safety gear such as insulated gloves and ensure other safety measures, like the insulation of controls, are in place. In this case, the employer contacted the Michigan Miss Dig program to request and mark the location of underground utility lines but did not mark the overhead power lines.

Source: Michigan Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 02MI152