

Case 53. 23-year-old male ironworker was electrocuted while operating a rough terrain fork truck that made contact with a 4800-volt overhead power line.

On November 20, 2003, a 23-year-old male ironworker was electrocuted while operating a rough terrain fork truck that made contact with a 4800-volt overhead power line. The victim was a member of a work crew that was installing metal decking on the roof of a pre-engineered building frame. A generator used for power tools was located under the decking on the ground. The ground was muddy. The GFCI for the generator kept “tripping” requiring the victim to repeatedly go down to the ground via a ladder and reset the GFCI. Earlier in the day, the victim’s supervisor had used an extensible boom rough terrain forklift to place two boxes of material on the roof decking. The victim drove this forklift to the site of the generator and was going to lift the generator to the area where they were working. There was approximately 11-12 feet of space between the building, which was approximately 23-25 feet in height, and the electrical wires. The power line was 29 feet off the ground. The workers on-site were aware of the power line; it was a topic of conversation each day. As he was lifting the generator, the front face of the boom contacted the energized 4800-volt electrical line. He attempted to exit the cab. He made contact with the ground while his hand was on the cab and was electrocuted.

MIOSHA issued the following “Serious” citations to the employer:

1. On three instances, employees came closer than ten feet to the 4800-volt phase to ground distribution lines less than 14 feet from their work area. Employees were not specifically covered by Part 16. Power Transmission and Distribution, Part 17 Electrical Installations, or Part 30. Telecommunications of the Construction Safety Standard Commission Standards, being R408.41601 et seq., R408.41701 et seq., and R408.43001 et seq. of the Michigan Administrative Code. Employees not specifically covered under these standards are not allowed by the employer to work or be closer to energized electrical lines, gear, or equipment exposed to contact than the minimum clearance prescribed in Table 1. (General Rules, Part 1, Rule 115(4))
2. The jobsite was not inspected to ensure all unsafe conditions were eliminated. A company official canceled a request to have power lines covered in and along the work area. Employees’ recognition and avoidance of hazards were violated by actions of the company foreman. Company written Safety Program falls short in addressing items (E) and (F) of the accident prevention program requirements mandated by Standard. (General Rules, Part 1, Rule R408.40114(2))