

Case 171. 29-year-old male supervisor for a landscaping and tree-trimming firm was electrocuted when an energized power line broke, fell to the ground, and the current passed through the dew-covered grass.

A 29-year-old male supervisor for a landscaping and tree-trimming firm was electrocuted when an energized power line broke, fell to the ground, and the current passed through the dew-covered grass. The decedent was a member of a three-person crew removing dead trees near a power line. Another crewmember had cut a branch and the branch fell upon a guy wire. The decedent was attempting to dislodge the branch from the guy wire of a cable television line by pulling on it when the guy wire broke. The lower part of the guy wire fell to the ground and the top part flipped up and struck the energized overhead power line. The power line was sparking, and then the power line fell to the ground. When the energized line touched the ground, the ground became energized. Current passed through the dew-covered ground and electrocuted him.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue any citations to the employer upon conclusion of their investigation. MIOSHA issued the following Safety Recommendation to the employer.

Safety Recommendation: Develop and implement a procedure for your tree trimmers to instruct them that if any power or guy wires are broken in the course of their work that they back off to a minimum of 25 feet and reassess the situation.