

Case 199. 33-year-old journeyman lineman was killed when the cross arm of a 35-foot section of a wood power pole he was topping landed on his back, pinning him to the elevated bucket.

A 33-year-old male journeyman lineman was killed when the cross arm of a 35-foot section of a wood power pole he was topping landed on his back, pinning him to the elevated bucket. A different work crew had previously cut sections off both of the cross arms and the top of the utility pole. The decedent was the foreman of the work crew which was at the site to complete the removal of the pole so new metal poles could be set. The decedent and a coworker were raised in the bucket approximately 25-30 feet. The decedent made two cuts approximately one foot apart on each side of the pole roughly 35 feet down from the top of the pole. The portion of the cross arms were still present. As he finished the cuts, the pole started to fall toward the elevated bucket. The decedent and his coworker both attempted to push the falling pole away from the bucket. The top of the pole got caught on a lower power line and then bounced up, landing on the decedent's back, pinning him to the bucket. The bucket stalled and could not be operated from either the ground or from the bucket controls. Another coworker on the ground cut the pole at its base so the pole top pinning the decedent could fall to the ground. After the pole top fell, the bucket was operational and was lowered to the ground. Emergency response was called and the decedent was transported to a local hospital where he died.

At the conclusion of its investigation, MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health Division issued the following Safety/Health Recommendation:

Implement a written procedure in your safety manual that describes in detail how a crew is to do pole topping, wrecking, etc. This procedure should include maximum lengths to be cut without a crane or bucket supporting the pole, when to use a crane, safety meetings, etc.