

Case 338. 23-year-old tree trimmer died when his upper back contacted an energized C-phase 7,980-volt overhead power line.

A 23-year-old male tree trimmer died when his upper back contacted an energized C-phase 7,980-volt overhead power line. The decedent climbed the side of a pine tree which faced the power lines to trim branches that were located too close to the energized lines. His coworker was the grounds person. The decedent was positioned approximately 17 feet above the ground, tied in, with his back facing the power lines. He double hooked his trim saw and then asked the grounds person for his insulated pruners. The grounds person bent over to pick up the pruners and then saw a flash of light. There had been heavy rain the night before the incident and the morning of the incident. Additional environmental conditions contributing to this incident were the heavy tree canopy, the power lines were green and oxidized and tree branches were touching the conductors. The decedent's upper back contacted the energized line and the electrical current exited via his right forearm. He died instantly when the current crossed his heart.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the alleged Serious citation at the conclusion of its investigation.

Serious: ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION, TRANSMISSION, AND DISTRIBUTION, PART 86

- RULE 1910.269(c)(2)(i):

The employer shall ensure that the employee in charge conducts a job briefing with the employees involved before they start each job. The briefing shall cover at least the following subjects: hazards associated with the job, work procedures involved, special precautions, energy source controls, and personal protective equipment requirements. A brief discussion is satisfactory if the work involved is routine and if the employee, by virtue of training and experience, can reasonably be expected to recognize and avoid the hazards involved in the job. A more extensive discussion shall be conducted: If the work is complicated or particularly hazardous.

Inadequate job briefing [i.e., weather conditions, conductors touching the tree] were not addressed. Tree located behind the residence.

- RULE 1910.269(a)(2)(i):

The employer shall ensure that no employee approaches or takes any conductive object closer to exposed energized parts than set forth in Table R-6 through Table R-10, unless: The employee is insulated from the energized part (insulating gloves or insulating gloves and sleeves worn in accordance with paragraph (1)(3) of this section are considered insulation of the employee only with regard to the energized part upon which work is being performed), or the energized part is insulated from the employee and from any other conductive object at a different potential, or the employee is insulated from any other exposed conductive object at a different potential, or the employee is insulated from any other exposed conductive object, as during live-line bare-hand work.

Not enforcing the minimum approach distance for a tree trimmer – tree located behind the residence.