

Case 435. 36-year-old gutter installer died when he was electrocuted by an ungrounded 7000/8750-watt portable generator located inside the back of a box truck.

A 36-year-old male gutter installer died when he was electrocuted by an ungrounded 7000/8750-watt portable generator located inside the back of a box truck. The company had been hired as a subcontractor to install gutter and trim work at a residential home. The decedent and a coworker had finished installing the gutters and trim. Inside of the back of the box truck, which was owned by the decedent, was a 7000/8750-watt portable generator. The generator was sitting on tires, and the tires were lying on the wood floor of the truck. The generator was used to provide power to the gutter machine to cut the gutters. The coworker hadn't seen the decedent for at least 30 minutes, so went to look for him. The coworker saw white smoke emanating from the back of the box truck. Looking inside, he found the decedent slumped over the generator which was "on". The coworker felt a "shock" when he touched the decedent. The coworker was able to find the "off" switch and turned the generator off and then called for emergency response. Due to ladders on the floor, the emergency responders were initially unable to remove the decedent from the generator. Following the removal of the ladders, emergency responders moved the decedent away from the generator and initiated emergency measures. The decedent was declared dead at the scene. It was unclear to the coworker why the generator was on, as all the gutters and trim were in place and there were no more cuts to be made with the gutter machine. It was found that the generator did not have an earth ground. Third party testing identified no unusual findings for the generator.

MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious and one Other-than-Serious citations to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation.

SERIOUS: MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT, ACT 154, RULE 408.1011(a):

Furnish to each employee, employment and a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to the employee.

Employees engaged in residential siding activities operating a 7000/8750-watt generator inside the back of a box truck. Employees exposed to electrocution and asphyxiation. An earth ground was not provided for generator operations and the generator operated inside an enclosed truck with rear door open. (*Brand name of generator removed by MIFACE*)

Methods of abatement would be to remove the generator from the box truck and follow the owner's manual and safety instructions for the generator.

SERIOUS: GENERAL RULES, CS PART 1, RULE 408.40114(1):

An employer shall develop, maintain, and coordinate with employees an accident prevention program, a copy of which shall be available at the work site.

The employer did not develop, maintain, and coordinate an accident prevention program. Employees exposed to hazards related to a portable generator located in the company box truck.

OTHER-THAN-SERIOUS: RECORDING AND REPORTING OF OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES, ADM Part 11, RULE 408.22139(1):

Within 8 hours after the death of any employee from a work-related incident, you must report the fatality by telephone to the MIOSHA toll-free central telephone number: Michigan, phone 1-800-858-0397.

The employer did not report to MIOSHA within the time limit of 8 hours.