Electric Shock Leads To Suffocation

A worker received an electric shock when he touched a boom on a lifting device. The ground wire had become detached. It was a hot day, so his skin was sweaty and moist, making it easy to conduct current. He received a jolt of about 20 to 25 amps, which caused him to vomit and choke. His heart began to beat erratically, and he was not able to breathe because his tongue blocked his air passage.

It is possible his life could have been saved if fellow workers had a basic understanding of first aid. If someone had been able to clear his airway and help him to breathe, he might have made it. The coroner's jury investigating this case recommended that explicit diagrams and instructions on rescue breathing be posted at fire extinguisher or fire hose locations. These locations were also to be equipped with plastic airway tubes and other lifesaving devices.