

Half-Safe Setup Claims Worker

Electrical lines were grounded and de-energized before a lineman went to work on them, but he still died of electrocution.

He was working from an aerial lift with an articulated boom. The basket touched energized lines located beneath the de-energized lines. An insulation defect in the lift basket allowed current to pass through the body of the basket and through the employee, then to the ground by way of a de-energized line.

Investigators looking into this fatality found barriers should have been put up to avoid contact with energized lines. As well, there should have been a thorough assessment of the work conditions, including mechanical equipment such as the lift, energized electrical equipment, poles and location of lines. In other words, lack of supervision allowed these precautions to be ignored.

To prevent fatalities like this, employees must be instructed how to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions and they must know regulations applying to a particular work environment. The job safety breakdown should involve all workers associated with the job to be done.

The victim of this fatality was a utility worker, but similar incidents can occur in any industry. Can you think of any situation in your work area where a worker supposedly is protected from a hazard and yet could contact that hazard by another means? Halfway safe is not