Lack of Lockout and Communication Causes Electrocution

An apprentice electrician was killed by contact with 525 volts while he was installing a switchgear for a large piece of machinery in a manufacturing plant.

The victim was running a ground wire when he came into contact with an energized electrical power source. He had been working under the supervision of one journeyman who left for another job. A second journeyman took over. It appears the victim was not aware the panel he was working on was energized.

It took eight or ten minutes to get the victim to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Failure to lock out the power source and failure to communicate appear to be the main factors in this fatality. The primary power source had not been isolated before this job. The job was large and complex, there were changing schedules and a deadline to meet. It appears neither the journeymen nor the apprentice were adequately trained or informed about safe procedures. Transfer of information is vital on all jobs. Information must be passed from one shift to the next and from the foreman to the crew. Job status must be updated and hazards discussed. If an adequate lockout-tagout system had been implemented, this death could have been prevented.