Meter Reader Grabs Clothesline and 110 Volts

A meter reader died when he contacted an energized clothesline at a residence.

He was part of a crew working to restore electrical power to a neighborhood following hurricane damage. He was about to tell the residents that their power was back on. He entered the house yard by stepping over a chain-link fence. Doing so, he lost his balance and grabbed the wire clothesline. His co-workers saw he was being shocked, and knocked him away from the clothesline and fence.

The clothesline had become energized when a 110-volt secondary service from a nearby house had been torn loose from its connection and was lying across a tin roof, a metal pole and the clothesline. When the victim grabbed the clothesline, his body provided a path to ground and he was electrocuted.

Investigators made these recommendations to electrical utility companies to prevent future fatalities:

- Conduct a comprehensive jobsite survey prior to the start of work to identify all potential hazards that workers might encounter during the performance of their duties.
- Provide and utilize adequate lighting while performing workplace safety inspections prior to the start of work and during powerline repair work at night.
- Instruct all workers to treat all conductive components in their work area with extreme caution, especially when the electrical system in their work area has suffered extensive damage.
- Instruct all workers to wear appropriate personal protective equipment.

In any disaster such as a storm, flood, earthquake or fire, be alert to electrical hazards.