Operator Killed as Boom Touches Power Line

A company was contracted to dig post holes for a fencing project which was located adjacent to overhead power lines. A hydraulic auger with a 30-foot boom was being operated from a flatbed truck. On the day of the incident, the foreman and a co-worker were following the auger, placing posts in the holes. They heard an arcing noise and saw the boom of the truck touch the high voltage line. As they ran to the truck, it became engulfed in flames. They found the operator dead at the rear of the burning truck.

This type of situation calls for a number of safeguards. The first step should be a pre-job meeting – a necessity no matter what the job. In a case such as this, the contractor, workers and power company representatives would discuss safe procedures and alternatives. These would include rerouting or shutting off the power or guarding the live power lines and having a power company signaler present at all times to keep the boom away from the power line.

No matter what kind of work you do, remember the importance of pre-job planning. Ensure signalers are in place to warn of danger, and be aware that the presence of power lines always represents an extremely hazardous situation.