Sampling Rod Touches Live Wire

A long metal rod being handled by three workers touched an overhead power line. Two of the workers died of electrocution and the third was severely injured.

The fatality occurred when they were using a core sampling rig to drill into the earth. They were employed by an engineering company and were running tests for geothermal energy (heat energy from the earth’s interior).

They were working around a 22-foot (6.71-meter) guy wire on the rig. As they removed the sampling rod, it touched a 4,160-volt electrical power line. The worker handling the sampling rod and the worker handling the guy wire were killed. The third employee, who was also handling the sampling rod, survived with serious injuries.

They had been on this job for two days in cold and rainy weather, and had moved too close to the power line.

Construction workers, well-diggers, heavy equipment operators, farmers, truck drivers and those employed in many other occupations are at risk for this kind of incident. Make sure you know the safe distance limits when you work near power lines, and have a lookout on duty. A job safety breakdown before a job such as this might have identified the hazard. Remember also to watch for overhead electrical hazards when you do home maintenance or drive a motor vehicle.