

Use Caution Near Overhead Power Lines

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Each year construction workers are killed or disabled after accidentally coming into contact with high voltage overhead power lines. It's important for the safety and life of everyone who works around these power lines, especially if operating machinery with cranes or booms, to be fully aware of their electrocution hazards.

There are steps that employers and site supervisors can take to optimize worker safety when working around overhead the power lines. First, train all workers to recognize the hazards associated with power lines. Then, insure workers comply with Cal/OSHA regulations that apply to their work situation. Workers should be instructed to assume that all power lines are energized and to keep well away from vehicles working close to the lines.

Before work begins, the site supervisors should know the location and voltage of all overhead power lines within the site area and make them known to workers. They should determine if any equipment could come into contact with the overhead lines during operation then mark travel routes where equipment can safely move beneath the lines. As an added safety precaution, have the overhead lines de-energized during scheduled work times.

Require that machinery with cranes or booms be operated only if necessary and by workers specifically trained to do so. This machinery should be operated only if a safe, minimum clearance is maintained as regulated by Cal/OSHA. The machine operator should be moving the equipment at a slower-than-normal rate in the area of power lines and use extra caution when moving over uneven ground that could cause the equipment to weave or bob into power lines. Where it's difficult for the equipment operator to see the power lines or see the clearance during machine movement, a person should be positioned whose *only* responsibility is to watch the clearance and give immediate warning to the operator when the equipment comes close to the limits of safe clearance.

It also makes good sense for the safety of those who work around high voltage overhead power lines that they be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and have a quick way of calling for or getting help if a power line accident occurs. □