

Grays Harbor PUD

Elma Pole Yard

Accident Report

May 1, 2018

Reported by

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Accident Investigator

Local 77

On May 1, 2018, around 1:30 p.m. at the Elma pole yard located at 2nd Street Elma, Washington, a group of PUD employees consisting of a Line Equipment Operator, Head Groundsman, and Flagger were loading multiple 35' poles onto a pole trailer with a line truck. Stored in that yard, among other material, are 35', 45', and 50' and larger poles in multiple pole bunks. The room at the time between the pole bunks was minimal. While loading, the Operator lifted the pole with tongs on the whipline. The poles were packed in tightly and the top of the pole was pinched between and under other poles in the bunk causing the butt to raise and the top to remain stuck in the bunk. While trying to dislodge the pole, the whipline got into an angle. The Head Groundsman was at the butt of the pole about head to shoulder height with the pole butt and put his arm over the pole, then put his weight on the butt in an effort to get the top loose. At the time he put his weight on the butt, the top dislodged and the resulting angle and tension on the pole caused it to find center resulting in his arm being caught and smashed between the pole butt and bunk of poles behind him. (Reference the picture with the railroad truck in the background, the poles on the right side are the 35'ers and the blonder pole on top is the pole that was being loaded and it is clearly up against the poles in the adjoining bunk.) The Head Groundsman quickly pulled his arm out and to his body. The LEO and Flagger ran to assist him, realizing he had a laceration on his arm they put him in a pickup and promptly took him to Summit Pacific Hospital about a mile away in Elma and notified the Foreman and District Supervision. The Head Groundsman sustained a dislocated shoulder that he relocated himself at the pole yard, major bruising to his elbow, and 5 stitches. He is still currently off work going through physical therapy, but is doing and progressing fine and is in good spirits.

The unsafe condition was being in the bite in a tight location, and having an angle and unpredictable load on a whipline. Since this accident has happened, the yard has been cleaned and reorganized to allow for more room between poles and bunks (see 2 other attached photos.) The Operator has also stated that if the poles become hung up like that again there is a forklift at that yard that will be utilized to lift poles out of the bind that they may be caught in to have the poles lift freely.

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