

POTELCO

ACCIDENT

November 30, 2009

Investigated and Reported by
Todd Proudlock
IBEW Local 77 Accident Investigator

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On November 30, 2009, Potelco had an injury accident in Anacortes, Washington at 9:00 PM. The four person crew consisting of 1 Foreman, 2 Linemen and 1 Apprentice were dispatched out of Potelco's Burlington headquarters to replace and repair a bad 15 kva transformer in a field with no truck access. They decided to use Potelco's small track hoe they had in their yard to haul the transformer, tools and material through the muddy field. Upon arriving at the location they had a tailboard and decided they would use the track hoe with a rope, transformer gin and a butt block to lower the old transformer and lift the new transformer into place.

It was dark and muddy. They had small light setup attached to a hand truck. After illuminating the work area the best they could, the Foreman climbed the pole to hang the transformer gin block and rope. The transformer had been de-energized by the Serviceman prior to their arrival. On the ground Lineman #1 and the Apprentice rigged the butt block and tied the rope to the track hoe. The plan was to have Lineman #2 pick and lower the transformer with the rope tied to the track hoe. They picked the transformer and started walking the track hoe towards the pole to lower it. They ran out of room and where two blocked with the transformer still 10 to 12 feet off the ground. The rope was plenty long and they still had plenty of extra rope. They just parked the track hoe too close to the pole and didn't give themselves enough room to allow the transformer to reach the ground. So they stopped the hoe about 5-6 feet from the pole.

To remedy the problem, they decided to take a few wraps off the tail of the knot around the bucket of the hoe, then untie the knot, hoping to slip the rope into the new wraps, then burn the transformer to the ground. Lineman #1 and the Apprentice took the tail of the rope and wrapped the rope around the bucket. Lineman #1 then started to untie the knot, at the same time trying to keep pressure on the fall line to slow down the rope down while the slack was taken out of the rope from knot to knot. When Lineman #1 untied the knot, the rope took off and his hand got caught in the rope and was pulled about 4 feet towards the pole and his hand became wedged into the butt block. The 420 lb transformer came down and struck Lineman #1 in the head, broke his hard hat and cut open the back of his head. The transformer stopped about 3 feet of the ground with his hand stopping it in the block. After getting the transformer to the ground, they called an ambulance and Lineman #1 was taken to the local hospital in Anacortes, where he was treated for a broken pinky finger and received 3 staples in the back of his head.

The injured lineman was back to work the next day on light duty.

Report submitted by Todd Proudlock, Accident Investigator for IBEW Local 77

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