

MICHELS POWER

Accident Report

January 13, 2015

Investigated and Reported by
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IBEW Local 77 Accident Investigator

Michels Power – January 13, 2015

On Tuesday, January 13, 2015, at approximately 10:00 a.m. a Michels Power journeyman lineman and a 7th step apprentice lineman were involved in an electrical contact in Snohomish, Washington.

The crew consisted of a foreman, one journeyman lineman, one 7th step apprentice and one cold apprentice. This was the lineman's 6th day on the job and the 7th step apprentices 2nd day on the job. The first day the apprentice was on the job he asked where the grounds were located on this section of line. He was told they were both east and west of the current job site; however, he was never shown their location.

The job consisted of an existing 3 phase line that they were inner setting new poles and re-conductoring to double circuit. They had the existing 3 phase spread out on hot arms and the load was transferred to one phase.

The morning of the accident the crew met and had a very brief tailboard. Their assignment was to finish setting the second pole for a regulator bank, and build the rack. The section of line they were working on was single phased and the two road side phases had bells cut in and were grounded and de-energized. While they were working on getting the pole set the foreman received a call from the Davey Tree crew foreman who was working up the road about 10 spans. The tree foreman needed the line crew to move the two road side phases off the hot arm and put them in the insulators on the cross arm to gain enough clearance for their boom truck. The foreman told the lineman what was needed in order for the tree crew to complete their job. The hot apprentice was not included in this tailboard. The lineman took off in the bucket leaving the hot apprentice behind. After the foreman realized the lineman had left the hot apprentice, he told him to go where the lineman was and assist the journeyman. The apprentice didn't know what job he was going to.

When the apprentice arrived at the site, the lineman was setting the outriggers down, getting his harness on and getting into the bucket. The apprentice put a harness on and asked the lineman if they needed a shotgun or a pigtail. He said no and told him to grab a section of a switch stick. Neither one of them tested the wire or used a ground at the worksite. The grounds that were supposed to be in place were not visible from this location. The apprentice flew the bucket up to the inside phase on the hot arm and grabbed it with his hands and set it in the insulator on the cross arm. He then reached back and grabbed the next phase on the hot arm and handed it to the lineman because he couldn't reach the insulator. When the lineman went to set the phase in the insulator he made contact with the other phase which caused a ball of fire. The circuit was on non-reclose. The apprentice flew the bucket down as fast as possible yelling to call 911. The Davey Tree Foreman was already on the phone with them. The apprentice and one of the tree trimmers helped the lineman, who was conscious, get out of the bucket and off the truck. The aid car was there within 5 minutes to take over for the injured lineman and apprentice. They were both transferred to Harborview Medical Center where the apprentice was treated for a flash burn to his wrist and released.

It was determined that both the apprentice and the lineman thought the line was de-energized and grounded. The line foreman was not at the accident site when it happened. The section of line where the accident occurred had been heated back up the week prior.

Recommendations:

- Proper use of grounds (equipotential grounding)
- Job briefing (updates throughout the day)
- Better communication

LM:ekk/opeiu8/afl-cio



Accident site





