

Michels Power

Accident Report

September 27, 2012

Investigated and Reported by
Brad Kime
IBEW 77 Accident Investigator

On September 27th, 2012 at approximately 9:30 a.m. an accident occurred at 24917 84th Street SE in Monroe, Washington. A 5th step Apprentice working for Michels Power's fell approximately twenty-five (25) feet to the ground. He was taken to Providence Hospital in Everett, WA. And, later was transferred to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, WA. where he underwent back surgery. He is currently recovering in the hospital.

The Michels Power's 3-man crew consisted of one operator and one 5th-step apprentice. Their assignment was to test the system neutral on an underground dip off of pole majj-6 on 84th Street SE. These tests were to determine whether this underground cable would be a good candidate for cable injection; which extends the life of the cable for another 10 to 20 years. The equipment needed at pole majj-6, which would be used approximately 45 feet up the pole and attached to the concentric neutral of underground riser on this 60-foot pole. Employee #1 (the apprentice) was to climb up and attach the equipment.

After dropping off the tools required at the pole employee #2 (the foreman) and employee #3 (an operator) drove approximately 645 feet to a j-box, vault #10059. While moving to this location employee #3 controlled the pay out of the wire used to test the concentric neutral, which was on a reel in the back of the pickup. After arriving at the j-box employees #2 and #3 got the gear out to be used at this location for testing. After preparing this end of the job for testing employee #3 walked back to the pole where employee #1 had already ascended and was using a hand line to pull up his shotgun and the test cable.

Testing was complete and the tools were sent down the pole by hand line. As the operator was gathering the tools and hand-line on the ground employee #1 was descending the pole. This pole had a primary riser on it with riser brackets that the climber has to un-belt his safety strap in order to pass around. In the process of passing his safety belt around the pole employee #1 lost his grip and fell to the ground, about 25 feet down.

Employee #3 stated that he had his head down cleaning the tools and hand line. Employee #2 was still over at the j-box. Employee #1 does not have any recollection about this accident other than un-belting on his way down the pole.

At the time of the accident Michels Power did not have fall restraint safety straps. In the pictures that follow you will see that employee #1 was very fortunate, given the 10'x10' post on the northeast corner of this pole. There are also large signs attached to the pole at its base and thick brush consisting of blackberries on the northwest side.

Possible remedies:

- 1.) Use a bucket truck where all dangers like a large fence post can't be removed from the work site.
- 2.) Use fall restraint safety straps such as the buck squeeze.

I was informed that Michels Power is in the process of training and using buck squeeze safety straps.