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SAFETY ALERT

08-S-13

LOAD BOOM TOUCHES POWER LINE, ELECTROCUTING SKIDDER OPERATOR

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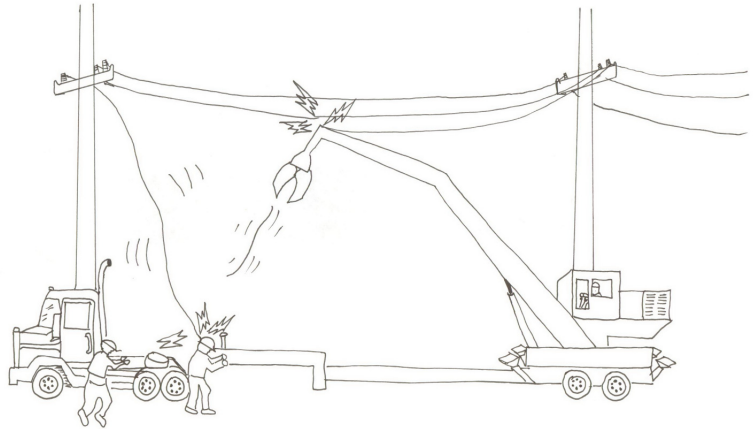
www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/08-s-13.html

BACKGROUND: On a summer day in the Southeast, a skidder operator had pulled the knuckleboom loader out of the woods with the skidder in preparation for moving the next day. Weather conditions were warm, clear, and dry, and the terrain was flat and sandy.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The 65-year-old skidder operator had worked for the logging crew for approximately 30 years and had operated forestry equipment throughout most of his life. He was considered fully trained, had no previous accident history, and was wearing personal protective equipment.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS:

The skidder operator parked the loader under a high-voltage power line. The next morning, the loader operator started the loader and raised the knuckleboom to ground the grapple on the trailer. Other co-workers were assisting with preparations to move the loader, and they were underneath the power line. The power lines carried 115,000 volts with three circuit interruptors, and the three bottom wires were 32.5 feet above the ground. (The loader had a total reach of approximately 38 feet.) The loader operator failed to recognize the proximity of the power lines when he raised the boom. Also, the overhead lexan window was dirty and scratched, possibly hindering the operator's view.



ACCIDENT: When the loader operator raised the loader boom, it struck the energized high-voltage line. The line arced and blew apart, shearing itself in three sections. One section landed on the skidder operator as he was standing next to the truck tractor that was going to back up to the knuckleboom loader trailer.

INJURY: The skidder operator was killed by electrocution. The truck driver received minor burns and was knocked off the step of the tractor.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- 1) Equipment operators must be aware of all hazards at the work site.
- 2) Never operate a loader within 100 feet of any electric power line. (see FRA Loss Control Overview #30 for additional power line safety recommendations at http://www.loggingsafety.com/app/index.php?r=loss_control_overview&a=view&i=125.)
- 3) Safety meetings should be conducted on the dangers of overhead hazards and on the importance of keeping equipment in proper working condition (including clean windows).
- 4) During the equipment loading or moving preparation process, only the workers directly involved in running the equipment (or spotting/aligning the machine if loading onto a lowboy) should be in the immediate proximity.

Reviewed by:
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Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.