

CRANE BOOMS AND POWER LINES

Our topic today is "Electrocution" or "What Can Happen When a Crane Boom Hits an Energized Power Line".

Most of you who have spent time in heavy construction know of someone who has been killed or severely shocked or burned by such an accident. The cause is generally poor judgment or forgetfulness. When a job is being planned, power lines should be located and the voltages determined. Provisions should be made to eliminate the danger by having the current shut off or to minimize the danger by setting up safe procedures. Make sure you know if the current is shut off and that you understand the established safe procedures when working around power lines.

A TYPICAL CASE

Forgetfulness is bad enough. But poor judgment is even worse, as illustrated by the following example: A change of work area made it necessary to position a crane under a power line. With the boom in the air, the crane was rolled forward and then stopped. Supposedly, it was far enough away from the line to allow the boom to be lowered without hitting the wires. But the boom didn't clear.

WHO WAS AT FAULT?

Who was guilty of poor judgment? The whole crew, which includes the operator and the men who guided the movement and gave the signals. What should the men have done? Obviously, they should have stopped the crane farther back. They also should have kept a close watch on the block as the boom was being lowered, and signaled the operator to stop when it became evident that the boom was going to hit the power line. Had they done so, the crane could have backed off and completed the lowering without a mishap.

But what about the operator? He knew the length of the boom and the arc it made when being raised or lowered. He should have allowed enough distance to provide clearance, regardless of the ground men's lack of judgment. All crew members share the responsibility for preventing accidents in situations such as the one described. All must be alert at all times; first to protect themselves, and second, to protect the other person. If someone appears to be forgetful or inattentive, wake that individual up.

WORTH REPEATING

When you're working close to a power line, use good judgment. Keep boom, cable block and tag line a minimum of ten feet away. Even greater clearance may be required, depending on voltage and work conditions. Remember that in some cases the current can jump from power line to the boom or cable without contact being made

