

CONSTRUCTION SITE ELECTRICAL SHOCK

Expert Investigates Electrical Shock & Fall from Scaffolding

A construction worker was injured while installing aluminum flashing on the exterior of a building. At the time of the incident he was working on scaffolding, approximately 22 feet above the ground, when the aluminum flashing he was maneuvering came into contact with a high-tension electrical utility wire. The construction worker was shocked and fell to the ground through an unguarded opening in the scaffolding. An electrical engineer from Robson Forensic was retained to determine if the contractor and/or general contractor caused, failed to prevent, or permitted conditions to exist at the worksite which were unreasonably dangerous in a manner which caused the injury.

When the aluminum section bridged between the high-voltage utility line and the scaffold, it created an electrical path to ground, known as a “ground fault”. A substantial amount of energy and heat were released. OSHA investigators interviewed the electrical utility and confirmed that the aluminum section had damage consistent with a power line contact. The electric utility also measured the distance from the power line to the scaffold and reported that the scaffold platform was 4 feet, 4” below the high-voltage lines, and 1 foot, 10” away horizontally.

Our expert opined that under the conditions at the worksite, the scaffolding could not have been positioned in a manner that provided adequate spacing from the high-tension wires. When work near a utility line is necessary, the general contractor and/or his sub-contractor must make arrangements with the electrical utility to de-energize and ground, re-locate, or otherwise safe-off the lines in a manner that prevents workers and materials from coming into contact with energized components.

Our expert determined that the shock occurred because the injured worker was forced to work at an unsafe distance from energized utility lines. The fall occurred due to deficient perimeter fall-protection barrier of the scaffold.

Our expert effectively demonstrated that had the correct instructions and training been given, and had the correct clearances between the scaffold and the energized utility lines been maintained, and had a proper perimeter fall-protection barrier been installed on the scaffold, the worker’s injury would not have occurred.

This matter resolved favorably for our client.