



SAFETY ALERT –WORKING NEAR OVERHEAD POWER LINES

The Incident

An outdoor media sign installer was working with his offsider removing and installing billboard advertising at the Northland Shopping Centre in Preston Victoria on the morning of 9 November 2010.

The 30 year old installer sustained electrical burns to his right arm, shoulder, abdomen, groin and head when the removable aluminium tracking came into contact with the overhead power lines adjacent to the structure.

The installer was immediately assisted by his fellow worker, who, with his first aid training was able to remove the injured worker from the electricity without becoming exposed to the electricity himself, and commence CPR himself until emergency services arrived.

The injured installer has received skin grafts on his burns and is expected to return to work performing limited duties in March 2011. It is expected that he will recover enough to return to his normal duties in the future.

Safety precautions to consider for all works near power sources

For Installers and other maintenance workers working on billboards-consider the following:

- Have all sources of energy been identified and discussed with all workers onsite?
- Have **safe work distances** and **No Go Zones** been identified – what are the distances to observe in your State or Territory? Some statutory authorities have separate defined areas. If you do not know – ask your employer.
- Does your safety documentation and training properly address all hazards and detail what controls you must use for working near or around power?
- Is there warning signage in place on the structure reminding you of the hazard?
- Are you able to stop work if you feel it is too dangerous to proceed?
- Can tracking be fixed to the sign on the side nearest the power? Or cut to a length that makes it impossible to enter the **no go zone**?
- At all times consider, if the tracking can reach or go near to power, you can be electrocuted.

For Installation and Maintenance Companies – consider the following:

- Can and should any metal tracking be fixed to the sign on the side nearest the power and restrict the possibility of tracking being removed from the side of the sign towards any power source?
- Can the tracking be removed from the middle of the sign instead of the ends?
- Can and should any metal tracking be cut to a length that makes it impossible to enter any danger zones?
- Has each site your company performs works on had a risk assessment and other site specific safety documentation conducted? These must detail all possible sources of harm and what controls must be observed by installers. And that training in these controls is also conducted and documented.
- Do your workers need any State or Territory based recognised training for working near overhead power?
- Does your company have a procedure for managing any Work Health and Safety issue raised by your workers?
- Does your company have a procedure for reporting Work Health and Safety issues to your clients?

For Advertising Companies, Site Owners and Designers - consider the following:

- For all new sites and existing site upgrades – can electrical and other significant hazards be eliminated through design?
- Is there a documented risk assessment done for all new works or existing site upgrades?
- Is there a process of consultation with the designers, fabricators and end users of any new site builds or existing site upgrades?
- Does your company have a procedure for managing and correcting Work Health and Safety issues reported on sites under your control?

This Safety Alert should serve as a reminder to all that accidents can and do happen.

All members of our industry must remain extremely vigilant to safety.

What can you do to improve safety within our industry?