

Safety and health alert

26/96 Dangers of working near overhead powerlines

Incident

A sixty year old council worker received a severe electric shock requiring CPR and surgery while pruning street trees in Dalwallinu in October 1996. He was working from an elevated work platform when his head came in contact with the overhead power lines. At the time he was being assisted by two ground crew. A similar incident also occurred recently at Swan View (see SIS 8/96).

Factors

1. The pruning task was not adequately assessed before work commenced.
2. Those involved were not adequately trained.
3. The basket was positioned too close to the live wires.
4. The ground crew did not alert the person pruning to the pending dangers.

Recommendations

1. No one must work closer than 3 metres to power lines up to 33kV, 6 metres to power lines above 33kV, or work above any power line, without specific training.
2. Compliance with regulation 3.64 of *the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996* and regulation 316A of the *Electricity Act Regulations 1947* is required. Copies of the legislation are available from State Law Publishers, 10 William Street, Perth.
3. A Code of Practice for Personnel Electrical Safety for Vegetation Control Work Near Live Powerlines was released in August 1996 by the Office of Energy and must be complied with. For more information telephone the Office of Energy on 422 5200, WorkSafe Western Australia on 327 8727 or Western Power on 411 7867.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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