



Safety Advice 13 -2008 (NZ)

Incident Outline

Two tree workers formally trained in tree maintenance around overhead electric lines were engaged in topping a row of young pine trees adjacent to 11 kV overhead electric lines. They were working under the asset owner's consent for mobile plant reduced minimum approach distance. One employee was acting as safety observer at ground-level, and the other employee was carrying out the topping work from within a HIAB crane mounted fibreglass personnel bucket. The employee was cutting through the top section of one of the pine trees with a small chainsaw, when the chainsaw grabbed causing loss of single hand control of the 3-4 metre length of tree top. The tree top fell over onto the employee, the fibre-glass personnel bucket and metal supporting yoke, and the adjacent live 11 kV overhead lines. This resulted in the employee receiving electric shocks.

Attempting to get away from the electric shocks, the employee detached his full harness lanyard/personal fall-arrest system from the metal supporting yoke of the fibre-glass personnel bucket and exited the bucket towards the tree. He fell approximately six metres through the tree branches to the ground. It appears the calf muscle area of his lower legs hit the top of a wooden railing fence during the fall.

Once the arcing noises from the tree-in-contact with the live 11 kV overhead lines ceased, the safety observer assisted the injured employee clear of the immediate area, and then lowered the bucket away using the ground-level HIAB controls. The tree top lying across the bucket and the 11 kV conductors then fell to the ground.

The safety observer transported the injured tree worker to their base of operations and he was then taken for medical treatment, where fibula fractures in each leg were diagnosed.

The incident is currently under investigation, and EEA will advise any further details about the tree work and incident facts and incident causes as these become available.

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