

Electrical hazards in the Telecommunication Industry

Attention: Telecommunication employers and employees in Washington State

Danger—Electrical Hazards

The Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) has recently learned that telecommunication workers are being contracted to install equipment on high voltage towers, poles or other support structures above energized lines and conductors.

Workers who climb and work above the level of the lowest electric power conductor on a tower, pole, or other support structures need specialized high-voltage training to do this work safely. Untrained workers are at increased risk of electrical shock from accidental contact with these lines, which can cause serious and disabling injuries or death.

Incidents can occur when the hazards are not identified and corrected prior to employees working in the area or when special precautions, work procedures, and energy source controls have not been implemented along with determining personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements.

What should I do to protect my workers?

- Provide journey-level lineman training to workers.
- Conduct a Job Hazard Analysis. Make it the core element in a tailgate meeting, and have all the workers sign it.
- Contact the local utility company prior to starting any work to determine the correct course of action to control or possibly eliminate electrical hazards.



Electrical hazards need to be controlled prior to start of the job.

Photo courtesy of L&I.

How can I prevent electrical hazards on my work sites?

- Work together with the utility company to control electrical hazards.
- If lines cannot be shut down, continue working closely with the utility company to come up with a viable solution.



Protect workers from electrical hazards.

Photo courtesy of L&I.



Know the safety rules to prevent worker exposure to high voltage electrical hazards

You must:

- Prohibit untrained workers from climbing and working above the level of the lowest power conductor on high voltage towers, poles or other support structures.
- Provide training to workers who use equipment such as:
 - Ariel lifts
 - Boom-truck-mounted supported bucket lifts
- Provide tower and bucket rescue training to those workers who are permitted to do the work.
- Control all energy sources prior to the start of the job.
- Appoint a competent lead worker to supervise other employees. Those appointed must be responsible for the safety of the workers under their supervision.
- Conduct a hazard assessment for PPE to determine if necessary or if there are other alternative ways to control or eliminate hazards.
- Provide a copy of the electrical workers' safety rules to each employee who is covered by those rules.
- Require that the lead worker conduct a job briefing with the workers involved before they start each job. The briefing must cover at least the following subjects:
 - Hazards associated with the job
 - Work procedures involved
 - Special precautions
 - Energy source control requirements
 - PPE requirements
- For more information, please see "Communication Tower Safety," "Electrical Power Generation" and "Telecommunications" located in the A-Z Safety & Health Topics website www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ.

Other resources you can access

To find an **electronic** copy of this Hazard Alert with active links to the following resources, go to www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/HazardAlerts.

Rules:

Rules that address telecommunication and electrical safety can be found in WACs 296-32 and 296-45.

L&I Safety Web page:
www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety

For other related rules, contact your local L&I office or visit the Safety Rules Webpage.

How can I get help from Labor & Industries?

The Department of Labor & Industries provides consultations, training, and technical assistance at no cost to employers. Call today to schedule a free confidential consultation or go to www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Consultation for more information. You may also call 1-800-423-7233 or visit a local L&I office and ask for the Consultation Manager.

*This alert was developed by L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSHS) to alert employers, labor groups, and employees to potential hazards associated with work activities. **This is not a rule and creates no new legal obligations.** The information provided includes suggested guidance on how to avoid workplace hazards and describes relevant mandatory safety and health rules. DOSHS recommends you also check the related rules for additional requirements.*