

# ACCIDENT REVIEW: STORM RESTORATION



Sometimes post-storm restoration efforts can be as dangerous as the storm itself. Here is a case study describing a fatality that occurred when a lineman was doing such work.

In this particular instance, a power company chief lineman was electrocuted after making contact with 4,200 volts from an energized power line. The incident occurred when the victim was preparing to splice a length of copper wire to a power line that had broken during a storm.

Although the line was thought to have been de-energized, feedback energy was present in the line from an energized transformer bank. The lineman was electrocuted after taking hold of the hanging line to begin the repair



The incident occurred alongside a roadway in a lightly populated residential area. A few days earlier a violent storm swept through the area and heavily damaged power lines throughout the region. That evening, the local power utility company went into emergency storm operation and dispatched work crews to repair the damage caused by the storm.

Early the next morning, a 7,200 volt primary overhead power line running alongside the roadway broke, starting a fire in a tree and causing a power outage in the area. At 11:30 a.m. the power company dispatched a repair crew to the site. The crew arrived to find the power line hanging down from a tree near the road. The cutout (fuse) that fed the downed line was also blown.

After arriving, the victim saw that the cutout feeding the downed line was blown and decided to disconnect the second line leading to the residences at an adjacent cutout box. The victim then reminded the lineman that although the lines had been de-energized, rubber sleeves and gloves would be required since the lines were not grounded. While the remaining men directed traffic on the road, the victim went to the truck and got a roll of copper wire and a tool to splice the break. Shortly before 1:30 p.m., the victim, who was wearing leather gloves, walked up to the power line and grabbed the hanging end with his right hand. He immediately stiffened and fell backwards against the pavement.

Investigators made the following recommendations following the incident:

- Employers and employees must insure that personal protective equipment such as insulating gloves are consistently used.
- All electrical lines and conductors should be tested to ensure that they are de-energized prior to working on or near them.
- Employers should ensure that established company safety procedures are followed at all times.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

**What steps can you take to prevent yourself from becoming injured or killed as a result of secondary storm hazards?**