

NATF Redacted Operating Experience Report

Lineman Fall Incident

About NATF Redacted Operating Experience (OE) Reports

North American Transmission Forum (NATF) operating experience reports highlight positive or negative transmission (reliability or resiliency) experiences worth sharing for learning opportunities or potential trending. The overall goal is to help each other learn without experiencing the same issues first-hand. This sharing originates confidentially within the NATF membership.

Redacted operating experience reports are posted on the NATF public website to allow the NATF and its members to more broadly share information, especially safety-related alerts and learnings, with contractors and other utilities to benefit the industry at large.

The NATF member company that submitted the initial restricted distribution OE report for this topic/event has approved the NATF to issue this redacted OE report.

Open Distribution

Copyright © 2021 North American Transmission Forum. Not for sale or commercial use. All rights reserved.

Disclaimer

This document was created by the North American Transmission Forum (NATF) to facilitate industry work to improve reliability and resiliency. The NATF reserves the right to make changes to the information contained herein without notice. No liability is assumed for any damages arising directly or indirectly by their use or application. The information provided in this document is provided on an “as is” basis. “North American Transmission Forum” and its associated logo are trademarks of NATF. Other product and brand names may be trademarks of their respective owners. This legend should not be removed from the document.

Topic

Lineman Fall Incident

Description

Two crews were tasked with installing a primary riser, pulling in primary and secondary cable from a pad-mount to a panel, and then to a pole. An apprentice lineman was using a primary climbing belt/harness and rope secondary safety (see photo below), which is an approved combination for pole climbing. The apprentice lineman was transitioning above the communication lines in order to “ream out” an existing hole when a second apprentice lineman reminded him to install the unistrut brackets. The apprentice lineman had the secondary rope safety engaged; however, he did not re-engage his fall-restriction equipment. The rope safety was across the hole on the backside of the pole. When the drill bit reached the end of the hole, it severed the rope safety.

The apprentice lineman subsequently fell off the pole at the communication level, approximately 10 to 15 feet, before hitting a roof and then falling an additional 6 to 8 feet to the ground. The electrical crew foreman assessed the employee for injuries. The employee stated he was okay and did not want to be transported. The foreman called 911, and the employee was taken to the hospital for further assessment, where he was evaluated and released the same day.



Figure 1: Apprentice Lineman No. 1's Fall Restriction Equipment (FRE). Note the rope safety that broke as a result of being drilled through.



Lessons Learned

The rope safety is more susceptible to failure in the case of human error when drilling tools are used while on a pole.

Guidance for field personnel:

1. Always use company-approved wood pole fall-restriction equipment when ascending, descending, and working in elevated positions on wood poles.
2. Always have good three-way communication and take a formal approach to the work.
3. Follow all proper procedures while waiting for first responders to arrive.
4. Look out for each other.
5. Inspect all fall-restriction equipment before use and remove from service if any abnormal wear or damage is observed.
6. Review and be familiar with company policy on wood and composite pole fall protection.

Corrective Actions

Transition from the use of rope safeties as an approved secondary safety to the use of belt safeties as an approved secondary safety.

Extent of Condition

This type of event/incident can occur anywhere a lineman is using a rope safety for the secondary safety and where certain equipment, such as a drilling tool, is being used.