

# NATF Redacted Operating Experience Report

## Fall from Pole Incident

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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.

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## Topic

Fall from Pole Incident

## Description

As part of new transformer installation work, an electric distribution contractor apprentice and journeyman lineman climbed a pole to make the secondary connections. The work area was approximately 25' from the ground (figure 1). The apprentice positioned himself under the transformer and had the secondary conductor laying across his belt over the braided synthetic rope portion of his safety line (figure 2). The apprentice began to cut the secondary conductor to length using lopper-style cutters (figure 3). While cutting the conductor, the apprentice inadvertently cut through the majority of his braided safety line (figure 4). The safety line then snapped, causing the fall-restraint equipment to open, resulting in the apprentice falling approximately 25' to the ground.

The apprentice fell face down through some small tree branches located next to the pole (figure 5), landing on his right side. Immediately following the fall, crew members rushed to assist. A property owner at the jobsite contacted 911 at the foreman's request, and the apprentice was transported via medevac to a hospital due to concerns of possible head trauma. The apprentice sustained a broken arm and was admitted to the hospital overnight for observation and additional medical treatment.



*Figure 1. Simulated location of employee*



*Figure 2. Pictures of safety belt configuration with cut braided safety line*



*Figure 3. Lopper style cutters*



*Figure 4. Braided safety line example indicating approximate cut location*



*Figure 5. Estimated location of impact on packed soil*

## Lessons Learned

1. Fall protection and personal protective equipment were properly used until the braided safety line was compromised.
2. When using loppers for cutting, ensure the blades are clear of any object (e.g., safety lines, body parts, etc.) other than the object intended for cutting.
3. Maintaining situational awareness is critical when performing work from a belted position.

## Actions Taken

1. Work was immediately stopped, and medical attention was rendered to the worker.
2. Contract management and safety supervisors were contacted to begin an investigation of the event.

## Extent of Condition

Cutting conductors from a belted position is a routine task for transmission and distribution linemen.