

NATF Redacted Operating Experience Report

Helicopter Incident

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Topic

Helicopter Incident

Description

A contract line mechanic came into contact with a multiple-circuit energized distribution line while performing work from a helicopter on a new transmission line build.

The line mechanic was in the process of hanging travelers (blocks) on a newly installed structure utilizing a “long line” setup with a helicopter. The long line placed the line mechanic 65’ below the helicopter, which would lower the line mechanic to the ground, attach the travelers, fly to position on the structure and attach. At the time of the incident, the line mechanic was on the ground connecting the travelers, which were placed about 20 linear feet from the existing distribution line when they were delivered by material specialists. Once connected to the travelers, the line mechanic signaled the pilot who proceeded to take off with the distribution line located in his blind spot (located out the passenger side of the aircraft). Upon take-off, the pilot flared the aircraft to line up the approach with the structure, which swung the line mechanic directly into the energized distribution lines. The line mechanic contacted the top circuit with his left hand and the lower circuit with his hip/upper leg causing entrance and exit wounds.

Lessons Learned

1. Material specialists require hazard awareness training for field set-ups.
2. Landing zones used during helicopter operations should maintain a 300’ clear zone from energized sources/structures.
3. A task-based hazard risk analysis should be completed in advance of all helicopter operations. It should include mitigation techniques to be used.

Corrective Actions

1. Issued a bulletin to emphasize the importance of documenting scope changes and a second review for job considerations, work steps, hazards, etc. on the daily job brief.
2. Developed a helicopter program management plan that provides committee governance, components, procedures, and approval package flow for use by stakeholders wishing to utilize helicopters on our company’s footprint, placing an emphasis on reducing the overall exposure to the hazards.
3. The material placement process has been modified with detailed mapping of material placement that mitigates the risks. Project maps are now labeled with a “no go” area for material laydown (shaded with red cross hatch markings).

Extent of Condition

This condition is applicable to similar transmission line scopes of work performed with a helicopter.