

Line of Fire & Pole-Handling Incident Review

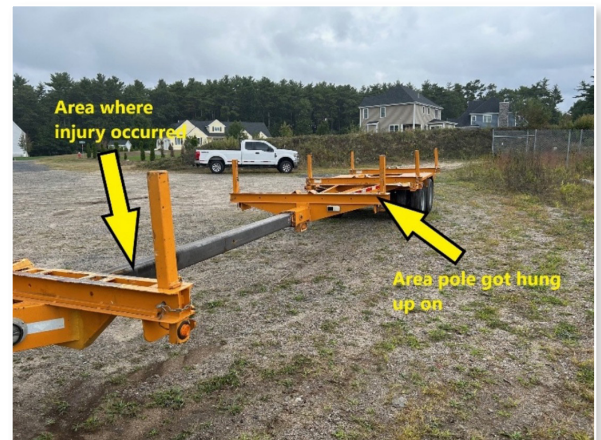


This Q3 OSHA ET&D Partnership Quarterly training was shared in an effort to raise awareness to some of the hazards of storing and handling utility poles. Some of the key hazards that are covered are **Line of Fire (LOF)**, **Pinch Points**, and **Stored Energy**. Below is an industry incident review where each of these hazards played a role in causing an injury to a line worker.

Incident Summary

An employee was helping a 4-person crew unload wood poles from a pole trailer. As the pole was being hoisted it was unbalanced and the butt end of the pole (loaded at front of trailer) fell toward the ground behind the front pole bunk/crossmember of the trailer. The weight of the pole came to rest slightly on the second pole bunk.

In order to unload it from the trailer, the lineman placed his left hand on the end and his right hand beneath the pole butt to help steady it, leaving ~3-foot gap between the pole butt and the pole bunk. Subsequently, a movement of the suspended pole overcame the friction that held the weight of the pole at the second bunk and caused it to swing in a pendulum motion.



As the pole moved forward, the employee's left hand was pinched between the trailer's front pole bunk/crossmember and the pole butt. The resulting injury was a fracture to the bone in his hand.

Hazard Identification/Control Failures:

- Employee's hand was positioned in the line of fire when movement caused pole to shift

Immediate Takeaways/Lessons Learned:

- Keep your body out of the Line of Fire
- Verify pole balance and control
- Make slow, deliberate movements with your hands
- Always question what the consequences of an action could be
- Utilize Energy Wheel during Job Brief
- Unload where there is adequate space for the pole and your body
- Verify effective communication (3-Part Communication, Hand Signals, etc.) is in place