

News Release



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U.S. Labor Department's OSHA calls upon Connecticut tree care industry to review hazards and safeguards following fatal electrocution in East Haddam *Houston, Texas-based company cited for repeat and serious hazards*

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. – The electrocution death of a tree trimmer in East Haddam, Conn., in October 2007 has prompted the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to urge employers and employees in Connecticut's tree care industry to reacquaint themselves about the hazards associated with their work and the protective measures they can take to address those hazards.

"Tree care employees are exposed to the dangers of falls, lacerations, being struck by vehicles and, in this case, electrocution resulting from contact with a power line," said Robert Kowalski, OSHA's area director in Bridgeport, whose office investigated the accident. "Now would be an appropriate time for employers and employees to focus on recognizing, identifying and addressing these hazards. That knowledge could save their lives and prevent another death."

OSHA has an ongoing alliance with the Connecticut Tree Protective Association to exchange information and facilitate training for the association's member companies. Detailed information about tree safety is available on OSHA's Web site at www.osha.gov/SLTC/treecare/index.html. More information about OSHA alliances in Connecticut is available from compliance assistance specialists in the agency's Bridgeport (203-579-5581) and Hartford (860-240-3153) area offices.

On Oct. 22, 2007, an employee of ABC Professional Tree Services Inc. of Houston, Texas, was electrocuted when an aerial lift contacted an energized overhead power line while employees were trimming trees on North Moodus Road in East Haddam. OSHA's inspection found that the boom was operating within two feet of the power line. OSHA standards require a minimum clearance of 10 feet.

As a result, OSHA issued ABC one repeat citation for not maintaining a safe distance from the power line and one serious citation for not conducting a workplace hazard assessment. The repeat citation stemmed from ABC's having been cited in March 2005 for a similar hazard at a Ponchatoula, La., worksite. OSHA issues a serious citation when death or serious physical harm is likely to result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known.

The company, which faces a total of \$37,000 in proposed fines, has 15 business days from receipt of its citations to request and participate in an informal conference with OSHA or to contest them before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to promote the safety and health of America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual process improvement in workplace safety and health. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

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