

Contractor Fatality: Electric Arc from High Voltage Cable

WHAT HAPPENED

A small team of contractors, were painting a clients building when one of them was fatally injured. He was stood outside on the raised level above the building entrance when the paint roller he was using produced an electric arc with some nearby high voltage cables, which caused an electric shock.

The contractor's colleague attended to him and the emergency services were called. They transferred the contractor to hospital, but sadly, he died two days later due to the nature of his injuries.



LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

The high voltage cables were visible from ground level and his working position but the contractor proceeded to work without taking the proper precautions.

- is everyone aware of the location of overhead electric cables?

- are they clearly identified?
- are managers and workers aware of the required safe distances that must be maintained and the overall precautions to take when work is being planned in the vicinity of electric cables?
- are these precautions documented in safe working procedures?

No effective contractor supervision or monitoring was in place for this work.

- do managers/supervisors monitor contractor activities?
- do managers/supervisors know what the monitoring arrangements should be?
- when a contractor is the appointed first line supervisor for their task, do company managers monitor the standards being applied?

The contractor was a 'crew foreman' and had responsibility for his colleagues, but safety was not a priority and a risk taking culture was evident. For example, the contractor was found not wearing the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the job, including a harness for working at height, and he was using a metal extension for the paint roller.

- do managers/supervisors lead by example at all times?
- are people aware of the need for a thorough assessment and to avoid taking risks always

assessment and to avoid taking risks, always putting safety first?

- is appropriate action taken when workers and managers/supervisors behave unsafely?
- are managers/supervisors fully aware of their health and safety responsibilities?
- are managers and workers aware of the precautions to take when work at height is required?

The contract company had a poor safety culture and adopted low standards of health and safety. Several contractor management deficiencies were identified during the investigation including an inadequate approval system, lack of training and insufficient safety requirements in the contracts.

- are effective contractor management procedures in place?
- do they include the need to ensure that contractors are competent and suitably trained for the work being undertaken?
- are all contractors assessed and approved before working for the company?
- is the Health and Safety Management System for Management of Contractors known and followed?

LOCATION:	OUTSIDE UK
ACTIVITY:	MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING
SUB ACTIVITY:	N/A

ALERT STATUS:	Normal
DATE ISSUED:	11/12/2013
INCIDENT No:	00372