



# Electrical problems

## Recognize, evaluate and control hazards to stay safe

**The accident:** A four-man crew was adding space to an existing building by erecting a brick wall. The workers had set up scaffolding, and were pouring grout and inserting rerod into the bricks. One of the workers lifted the 20-foot 1/2-inch section of rerod and made contact with a 4,800-volt primary electrical line. No one on the site was trained in CPR or first aid. The worker was later pronounced dead.

**The bottom line:** A post-accident investigation determined the workers had no training in either scaffold erection or electrical safety, and had placed the scaffolding too close to the power line. The investigation also found the employer had no safety program in place, and no supervisors were on site at the time of the accident.

### Before you begin

Your employer should have the company's competent person conduct a site evaluation prior to beginning work to identify both existing and potential hazards and take corrective action. Never begin work before a jobsite survey is completed.

Prior to beginning overhead work, or work around electricity, you should complete a comprehensive safety training program. This training will instruct you in safe work practices, hazard recognition and avoiding unsafe conditions, as well as identifying the person you should contact if a safety question arises.

### Expect danger

When working overhead with electricity, don't automatically assume the proper precautions have been taken. If you're working on a scaffold, you need to be trained in scaffold safety. Proper training will ensure you are able to erect the scaffold properly, and at a



Illustration by Don Lomax

safe distance from power lines or other hazards. Also, always assume every line is live. Even if you're dealing with an electrical current that isn't strong enough to kill you, the shock could cause you to fall, resulting in injury or death.

### First aid facts

What should you do if a coworker is shocked?

- Never touch the victim if he or she is still in contact with the electrical current.
- If you can't shut down the current, pry the victim from the circuit with a non-conducting material such as dry wood.
- Have someone call emergency services and remain with the victim.
- If the victim is conscious, do not allow them to move.
- Apply pressure to bleeding wounds, and elevate the injured area.
- If unconscious, check for breathing.
- If the victim isn't breathing, perform CPR. Do this quickly – you have only minutes. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch was taken from an accident report, the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Health

and Safety and the Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation Program. It is intended for general information only.