

10/01/2019

Serious Injury

- **Incident date:** 6/11/2018
- **Event:** Electric Shock
- **Location:** Guildford

Incident Overview

A 36-year-old worker was installing a steel reinforcement bar into a wall cavity on a construction site. While attempting to position the reinforcement bar to insert into the cavity, it extended past the edge of the scaffold and touched high voltage powerlines. The worker received serious injuries.

SafeWork NSW, NSW Police Force and other Emergency Services responded to the incident.

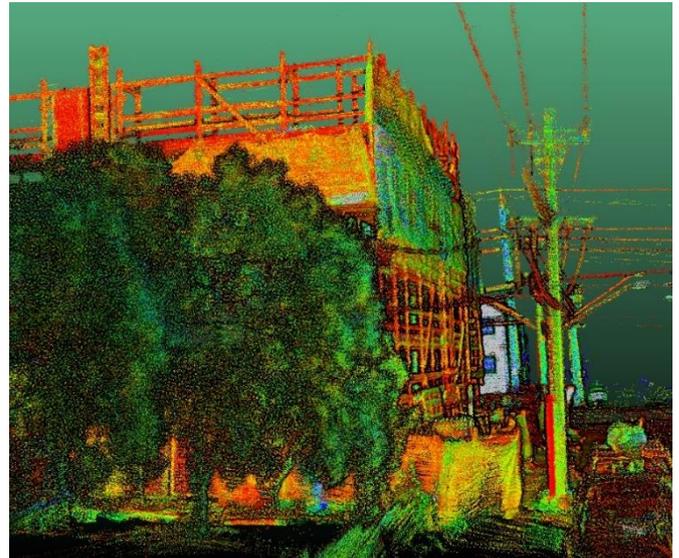


Image 1: Construction site where work was being done – noting red lines indicate where the power lines were located.

Image 2: Lidar scan, showing construction site and power lines where work was being done.

The site

The site is located at Guildford. Work being done at the site involves the construction of a low-rise apartment building.

The investigation

SafeWork NSW Inspectors responded to the incident.

Our [Prosecution Guidelines \(January 2018\)](#) outline our approach to prosecutions and Safe Work Australia's [National Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) provides guidance on our approach to compliance. These documents set out factors that will be considered in determining the investigative approach and appropriate outcome.

Safety Information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#).

Each year SafeWork NSW responds to many incidents where workers are seriously injured from coming in to contact with or working too close to overhead power lines where a 'flashover or arc' occurs. Workers can come in to contact with electric lines directly or indirectly through materials being handled or plant being operated near overhead power lines. Regardless of the voltage, which can be as high as 500,000 volts or as low as 230 volts, the consequences can be catastrophic.

Businesses and workers in the construction industry are reminded of the increased risks when working near overhead power lines. Businesses must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no person, plant or thing at the workplace comes within an unsafe distance of an overhead power line. If it is not reasonably practicable to ensure the safe distance of a person, plant or thing from an overhead or underground power line, the person conducting the business or undertaking at the workplace must make sure that:

- (a) a risk assessment is done in relation to the proposed work, and
- (b) control measures that are put in place are consistent with:
 - (i) the risk assessment, and
 - (ii) if an electricity supply authority is responsible for the power line, any requirements of the authority.

Note the requirements in the AS/NZS 4576 of a 4 metre approach distance for metallic scaffolding used near overhead power lines – where any scaffolding, hand held tools, equipment or materials may come within this 4 metre approach distance, a hazard identification and written risk assessment must be undertaken and measures undertaken to control risks to persons.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- [Code of Practice: Work Near Overhead Power Lines](#)
- [Erecting, altering and dismantling scaffolding - Part 1: Prefabricated steel modular scaffolding](#)

About this information release

We have issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious injury in the construction industry. Investigations are ongoing and more information may be published as it becomes available.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. Users are reminded of the need to make sure any information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate SafeWork NSW officer or the user's independent adviser. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

All photographs were taken by SafeWork NSW.