

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & BUSINESS SERVICES
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 16, 1998

To: Standards & Technical Resources File

From: Mike Mitchell, Occupational Safety Specialist

Subject: Use of Body Harness vs. Belt for Aerial Lift in Electrical Power Work

This memo is a follow-up to the May 20, 1997 memo to Standards & Technical Resources File Re: Use of Body Harness for Aerial Lift in Electrical Power Work.

During a September 30, 1997 meeting involving Gary Boswell and Dennis Klein, both of P.G.E., and Marilyn Schuster and Mike Mitchell, both of OR-OSHA, the question was asked if there had been any thought given to allowing power line workers doing hot work with hot sticks after January 1, 1998, to use safety belts with lanyards with a longer than two foot harness rather than harnesses with maximum six foot lanyards or belts with maximum two foot lanyards when working from aerial lift buckets. P.G.E.'s main arguments for using belts with longer lanyards when doing "hot work", with hot sticks, from a two-man bucket were that: (1) Two foot or less lanyards do not allow adequate mobility in a two-man bucket with the lanyard anchorage point on the boom; and (2) If harnesses are used, when the workers turn 180 degrees, after guiding the bucket up through the phases, the lanyards, which are attached in the middle of their back, often interfere with their arm movement. Anything that distracts a worker doing "hot work" creates a hazard.

Since Oregon has adopted the federal standards that require the use of harnesses in aerial lift buckets when the potential fall is greater than two feet, the decision was made to consult David Wallis, Federal OSHA, Electrical Standards Section, Washington D.C. (202-219-8161, extension 117) concerning P.G.E.'s concerns. Mr. Wallis had already been approached by another party with similar concerns and had already researched the subject, receiving help from I.B.E.W. The decision was made to require all workers, including those doing "hot work" from two-man buckets, with sticks, to wear harnesses when the fall potential is greater than two feet. If the fall potential is two feet or less then the use of safety belts are allowed.

Mr. Wallis suggested that if the lanyard, when worn with a harness, interferes with the movements of the worker when doing "hot work", then possibly a break-away clip could be added to the back of the harness that would serve to hold the lanyard near waist height and out of the way of arm movements, yet would break away and not interfere with the proper operation of the lanyard during a fall. Mr. Wallis said that there are not any standards that prohibit the use of such a clip.