

News and media

Risk posed by powerlines must be considered

28 July 2020

Any business conducting work near live powerlines must consider the risk they pose as part of its safety planning, says WorkSafe.

Logging company Mike Harris Earthmoving Limited was fined \$100,000 at the Rotorua District Court on Friday after a worker suffered burns from an electric shock that left them without full use of their right hand.

In November 2018 Mike Harris Earthmoving Limited was using a forwarder, a vehicle used to pick up and transport logs, at a Rotorua site when the forwarder's crane stopped working. The forwarder was then transported to an area on site to be repaired.

Once moved, the vehicle came in close enough contact with live powerlines for electricity to be conducted through the vehicle. As a result a worker who was holding a rail on the side of the machine at the time suffered a serious electric shock.

The worker suffered full thickness burns to his right foot and had to have two of his toes amputated. He also suffered full thickness burns to his right hand and has not been able to regain full use of his hand.

WorkSafe's Acting Chief Inspector Danielle Henry said the incident left one person seriously injured but also put several others at serious risk.

"This work should not have been carried out near live powerlines. Before beginning repairs the company should have considered proximity to the powerlines and the potential for worker injury if the machine came into contact with live electricity.

"Mike Harris Earthmoving Limited didn't have an area designated for repairs. This is a reminder to all businesses that the risk of powerlines must be considered. This company's failure to do so has left a worker with life changing injuries."

Notes:

- A fine of \$100,000 was imposed by the judge.
- Reparation of \$21,442 (in addition to \$23,558 already paid) was ordered.
- Mike Harris Earthmoving Limited was sentenced under sections 36(1)(a), 48(1) and (2)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.
- Being a PCBU, having a duty to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers who work for the PCBU, while the workers are at work in the business, did fail to comply with that duty and that failure exposed individuals to a risk of death or serious injury from electrocution.
- S 48(2)(c) carries a maximum penalty of \$1,500,000.

Media contact details

For more information you can contact our Media Team [using our media request form](#). Alternatively, you can:

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Last updated 29 July 2020 at 10:42

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NZBN: 9429041926437