

Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series!



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Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series. Today we will talk about pole-top rescue. Pole-top rescue is an important safety procedure in the electrical industry and a vital skill for linemen to know. When you and those around you become competent in this skill, your own life and the lives of your crewmembers are in much better hands.

As long as there have been power poles, there has been a need for pole top rescue. Consider how a well-practiced pole-top rescue procedure saved this man's life.



Jim, an electrical lineman, had just finished his rescue training atop a pole and was about to head down when he suffered a heart attack, lost consciousness, and fell back, limp, in his belt. Although horrified, his crew jumped to action to rescue him. While one person called emergency services, another suited up in his climbing tools and started up the pole.



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It was not long before Jim's crewmember reached him at the top of the pole. Very soon after that, he was lowered to the ground and two other crewmembers administered CPR until paramedics arrived. Luckily, Jim was breathing upon their arrival and was transported to the hospital where he recovered.



Jim is lucky to be alive thanks to the expertise and decisiveness of his coworkers. Unfortunately, incidents such as this happen quite often, and can result in tragedy if nobody on-site has the proper training. In fact, for every 100,000 electrical line workers in the industry, an average of 19.2 lose their lives and 1,990 are injured every year.





Certain incidents may necessitate that you help a coworker to reach the ground safely, including illness, severe injury, equipment failure, or electric shock. These situations, among others, may require that you perform a pole-top rescue. You must be trained in the proper steps to take to protect yourself, as well as your injured coworker, during this type of rescue.



It is important to note that local authorities are generally not trained on these types of rescues. It is best if emergency responders stand back and wait for the victim to be safely lowered to the ground by a qualified person before attempting to perform any lifesaving services.



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Within this training, you will learn about the various pieces of equipment available to you during a pole-top rescue. These will be vital to your success and safety. In addition, you will also learn how to properly execute a pole-top rescue from start to finish, including safe practices while climbing and descending your pole, and the best ways to rig the victim to get them to the ground



Finally, we will briefly discuss what hazards will be of the most danger to you while performing this type of rescue. Our goal is to make you aware of the best ways to reduce or eliminate these hazards in order to be as safe and efficient as possible.





STANDARDS

- 1910.269(a)(2)(i) – Rescue training requirements
- 1910.269(e)(3) – Rescue equipment

There are no specific standards concerning pole-top rescue because the conditions in which a rescue may be made vary so widely. However, OSHA does require workers to be trained and familiar with all safety-related practices, procedures, and equipment that pertain to their job requirements, including pole top rescue.



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We offer this training as an overview of safe rescue techniques. That being said, your company may have developed their own rescue techniques and procedures, and it is your responsibility to know and understand them. Furthermore, other states, provinces, or jurisdictions may have their own standards. It is your responsibility to know and follow these, as well.



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Why Training?

No matter the situation, it is common to hear workers and even employers ask, “Where does it state we need to be trained?” Can’t a worker also be deemed “qualified” based on experience? The answer is “no.” Experience helps, yes, but OSHA makes it very clear that employees must be trained (no matter how long they’ve been on the job) and that it is the employer who is responsible for overseeing safety training in order to confirm that the employees have the understanding, knowledge, and skills needed for operations.



Initial training and refresher training, as well as any written and practical evaluations, must be documented and filed. At the very least, in the case of an investigation, OSHA will want to see proof of proper and consistent training (in the way of training outlines, class lists, training goals, tests, certificates, and so on). These documents should include the name of the person who taught the class or conducted the evaluation.

Workers are required to receive refresher training when...

- 1 There are changes in their assigned duties.
- 2 There are changes regarding potential exposure to hazards for which the employees have not received training.
- 3 There is any deficiency noted in an employee's work performance that is related to the safety and health of themselves or other workers.
- 4 If an accident or anytime an employee is injured or nearly injured during operations.

NOTE: In some areas, refresher training is required at least every three years (if not sooner).

Training is not just a one-and-done occurrence; it is ongoing. In fact, similar to the guidelines set down for when initial training is required, OSHA is also specific when it comes to “refresher training.” More specifically, OSHA acknowledges the need for “refresher” or “follow up” training whenever there is a demonstrated need for it. The graphic to the left shows some demonstrated needs for retraining. Can you think of any others?



The extent of training will be determined by the employer, but at the very least it should include classroom instruction followed by a written and practical examination that prove continued competency.



Never take your training for granted. The time and attention that you give this topic now could mean a world of difference to whoever is at the top of the pole in the future, with their life depending on you.



Equipment

SAMPLE



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