

A Forty-Eight Foot Aluminum Ladder And A Gust Of Wind

Ten feet eight inches from the line to the wall. A father and his son.

10 MIN

NFPA 70E Art. 130 · OSHA overhead line approach distances

Washington FACE 71-210-2021

WHAT HAPPENED

2020 · Washington · Painting contractor · 55-year-old contractor and his 27-year-old son

A father-and-son painting crew had spent about a month on the exterior of a two-story church with a 60-foot steeple and were cleaning up for the day. The two men were moving an aluminum extension ladder that was still at its full 48-foot extension, holding it vertically while the son tried to retract it. Wind was blowing 15 to 30 miles per hour with gusts to 40. A gust pushed the ladder onto a 14,460-volt overhead line. Both men were electrocuted. The father died at the scene; the son died nearly a month later. Investigators measured just 10 feet 8 inches from the power line to the face of the building.

WHY IT HAPPENED

A fully extended aluminum ladder was carried upright in gusting wind next to a 14.4 kV line, with no survey, no non-conductive ladder, and no plan for how the ladder would be moved.

WHAT THE STANDARD REQUIRES

- Survey and record overhead line locations, heights, and distances before ladder work starts.
- Use non-conductive ladders anywhere near power lines.
- Lower the ladder and carry it horizontally. Most contacts happen during the carry, not the climb.
- Wind is a trigger to stop, not a difficulty to work through.

TALK ABOUT IT — DO NOT SKIP THIS PART

1. The job was over. They were cleaning up. When does our hazard assessment end?
2. How many aluminum ladders are on this site right now? Where are they used?
3. What wind speed stops work here — and who makes that call?

WHAT WE WILL DO DIFFERENTLY HERE

ATTENDANCE

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE