

**RE: AMEU TECHNICAL MEETING - ACCIDENT REPORTS**

Please find a brief description of a fatal accident at eThekwini Electricity on 22 January 2004. This report was requested before end July 2004 for AMEU Technical meeting in mid October 2004.

Please understand that this matter is subjudice as Department of Labour have not conducted their investigation yet and this report is only a brief outline of the incident.

**BRIEFLY**

The accident took place at approximately 11:55 am on the 22 January 2004 and involved three Clearance Assistants who work with a team under the supervision of a Ganger Driver to clear vegetation from the vicinity of power lines from 33 kV to 275 kV.

Our Control Section were notified via our laid down procedures of a "MAYDAY" incident and ambulances were dispatched urgently but unfortunately one worker had passed away and the other two who were burnt were taken to the local hospital and have since made a recovery and returned to light duty.

On the day of the accident the Ganger Driver was instructed to clear vegetation under one of two parallel 33 kV lines, physically separated by approximately 10 metres. These lines supply the Tongaat area which is supplied from an Eskom Substation. The line requiring attention had been isolated for other work on that circuit. On arrival at site the driver parked on the pavement in close vicinity to the work area as the road is a narrow and busy thoroughfare, unfortunately under the live 33kV line. The ground clearance satisfied the OHS Act requirements.

The aluminium ladder was taken off the top of the truck in the normal manner without incident by sliding it along the runners and then carried down a bank to the work site.

On completion of the job, the Clearance Assistants carried the ladder back to the truck and it has been stated that the gang was told to break for lunch. The fact is that the three Clearance Assistants proceeded to load the ladder back on the truck immediately and, for some reason, the ladder was raised into the vertical position and broke close proximity resulting in the flashover which killed one line hand and burnt two others.

**FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The incident has been used to re-emphasise to all staff the need for vigilance and that a vehicle of this sort must not be parked under an overhead line in this type of circumstance.
2. EThekwini Electricity are investigating the use of non-conducting ladders for the long extension ladders used by the HV Operations Department. (Fibre glass ladders are used exclusively in the case of the shorter extension ladders associated with LV and 11 kV power line work but aluminium ladders have been considered necessary for the conditions associated with the higher voltage power line work.)
3. All staff not yet instructed how to load and unload ladders have received training for this procedure under all situations.
4. EThekwini Electricity are negotiating with Eskom to have Sensitive Earth Fault protection at the source substation supplying the Tongaat area.

Bobby Nell, eThekwini