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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