Recognized Versus Unrecognized Hazards Fatality File



A Minnesota Power employee died of an electric shock during maintenance work at a substation near Bovey on Tuesday.

According to a report from the Itasca County Sheriff's Office, James Phillip Gibeau, 37, of Grand Rapids, was in the bucket of a truck replacing a line at the substation at 21441 County Road 434 when he was electrocuted at 2:14 p.m. Tuesday.

The report, written by three deputies that responded to the call, said other workers reported the line "was shut off but there was still a lot of static electricity that goes through the line."

The workers told deputies that Gibeau was holding a grounded metal ring with his left hand as he loosened bolts holding the small line he was removing, which was also connected to the main line, according to the report.

"The small line came out of the spot he loosened and he had grabbed it with his right hand making the connection complete," the report said.

That's when Gibeau was shocked, the report said.

Gibeau's supervisor told deputies that "if he knew the line was going to be disconnected, then he would have had the main overhead line grounded as well."

The report said employees and deputies performed CPR and used a defibrillator on Gibeau. Gibeau was then taken by ambulance to Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital.

He was later taken to Hennepin County Medical Center, Minnesota Power said Wednesday afternoon.

In a news release Wednesday afternoon, Minnesota Power, which did not name Gibeau, said he "experienced an electrical contact" as he worked on the substation's electrical equipment and died.

Minnesota Power spokesperson Amy Rutledge would not say whether he was electrocuted because "we are not in a position to provide information about a specific cause of death."

"Out of respect for the family and co-workers (we) will only share what we know at this time," Rutledge said in an email to the News Tribune.

After the incident, Minnesota Power stopped work at the substation “to allow for a thorough investigation.”