

Electrocution costs £230,000

Francis Michael Lyons, trading as Frank Lyons Plant Services, of Felstead, Essex and Lyons Landfill Ltd were each fined £80,000 plus £35,000 costs at St Albans Crown Court in November. The case was brought by the HSE after the death of self employed truck driver Nathaniel Hugh Scollan, 56, (also known as Hugh Breffni), who was electrocuted after the boom of his loader crane hit overhead power lines. The accident occurred at a combined quarry and landfill site at Hollingson Meads Quarry, Pole Hole, Gilston, Harlow, on the 10th September 2003. The company and Lyons were both committed to trial after entering Not Guilty pleas at Hertford Magistrates Court, in January.

Scollan had parked beneath the lines while waiting for a load of ballast from the quarry. As he raised the boom and grab of his loader crane it came into contact with the overhead lines. He sustained fatal injuries from the electric shock. The court heard that the site was poorly laid out with

stockpiles located close to the overhead lines, inadequate signs, poorly designed crossing points and inadequate measures taken to keep plant clear of the lines.

HSE principal inspector, Mike Gibb, said: "This was a tragic death that could have easily been prevented. Operators of plant may make mistakes and all reasonably practicable steps should be taken to ensure their errors don't result in loss of life or serious injury. I encourage all employers to carefully plan and put into place sensible precautions to prevent their workers, contractors or visitors to their site coming into contact with overhead power lines. Good management will reduce the risk of accidents happening.

"It is also important to remember that vehicles or mobile plant do not need to strike the overhead line for injury to occur. Electricity can arc across a surprising distance depending on the voltage and conditions." HSE's guidance note GS 6 gives detailed advice on the subject.

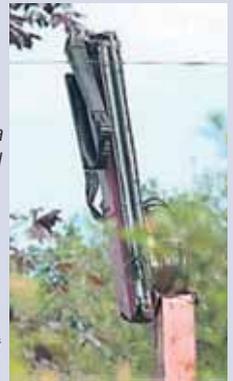
Crane operator electrocuted

A driver was electrocuted earlier this in late November when the boom of his loader crane touched overhead wires. The man, James A. Schock, 35, was a delivery driver for builder's merchants, Harvey Industries of Hanover Pennsylvania in the USA.

Schock was unloading roofing shingles at a house in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania when the homeowner, Joe Murtha, who was working on the roof of the house, shouted a warning to for him to watch out for the overhead electrical wires. In spite of this, Schock who was operating the crane with a remote controller raised the boom into the wires. He was not initially affected, Murtha said that he heard a zapping noise as the top of the boom touched the wires and yelled for his wife to call the emergency services while telling Schock not to move.

However when the tyres on the truck started smoking Schock tried to get into the truck, apparently to

move it away from the wires. As soon as he touched the truck he was electrocuted. Shortly afterwards the truck burst into flames. Northampton County chief deputy coroner Kelly Gillis said Schock, died at the scene. The coroner's office is still investigating the death and a representative from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration was also called to the scene. Around 80 local residents were left without power for a few hours following the accident.



Overhead wires are a real hazard for loader cranes. A properly trained operator should be looking out for them.



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