

January 7, 2019

## **2018 Power Delivery Safety Review**

Power Delivery Teammates,

Happy New Year! Looking back on 2018 from a safety perspective, we continue to see improvements in many areas, but at the same time we continue to experience significant events that were preventable. Fortunately, once again luck was on our side and I wonder if we made the most of our second chances?

When we review some of our safety indicators from Power Delivery, we saw an increase in injuries and ANSI preventable vehicle accidents but our OSHA recordables decreased by one. There were multiple flashes with safety rule violations and flashes from equipment failures which caused an injury. T&S experienced one of their best safety performances with six injuries, with four of those being OSHA recordables. But even with that good performance, two of their OSHA's were very serious in nature, which is why I don't get caught up in numbers because all it takes is one serious event to overshadow a good performance. There is one indicator that Distribution should be very proud of, and that is for a time frame of roughly six months during 2018, Power Delivery provided mutual assistance to Puerto Rico, North Carolina, Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and California in which only one OSHA recordable and a couple of minor injuries were experienced. The OSHA recordable was the result of a non-preventable vehicle accident in Puerto Rico. This is a remarkable performance, considering the hazards and the difficult work conditions the crews experienced.

On numerous occasions I was asked the following question when our teammates would return from a mutual assistance assignment. "So why is it that we can work in these hazardous and difficult conditions during mutual assistance assignments and be virtually injury free but yet, back at home, under ideal conditions a majority of the time we continue to get injured?" To answer the question, there are multiple reasons why this happens. First we must consider a concept from Human Performance about Performance Mode. As a recap, Performance Modes are broken into three categories; Skill, Rule and Knowledge based. These apply to the mode of operation we are in every moment of the day, depending on the situation. When you're very familiar with something then you're operating in a skilled base mode, versus something that your not too familiar with or have never been exposed to, then you are operating in a knowledge

base mode. The performance mode concept tells us that the more familiar we become with something, the less likely we are to be focused when performing the task. Even though line work is the same regardless of where it is performed; there are other things that are different on a mutual assistance assignment that makes an individual more focused on the task at hand. For example, the area in which the individual works in is different, driving conditions could be different due to the terrain, traffic, etc., the system of the host utility could be different, hardware & construction standards could be different, processes & procedures could be different, equipment & vehicles you work with could be different, crew size, personnel & supervision are different, etc. Any one of these items can very easily drive an individual out of their comfort zone, which in turn can heighten their awareness and focus. But at our home locations, operating under conditions we are very familiar with, it seems like our mindset changes and the mistakes individuals make are made, not because they don't know what they are doing, but instead from a lapse due to loss of focus.

Another thing that is more prevalent during mutual assistance is safety oversight. During mutual assistance, crews are continuously being visited. Generally most of the day, the supervisor is out in the field with the crew, a safety specialist will make visits to the crews on a regular basis, the incident commander of the travel team will make it a point to set aside some time each day to make crew visits and an appointed union representative will also make visits. At the staging sites, safety oversight is constant, looking for opportunities for improvements and correcting unsafe acts or conditions. Safety oversight goes beyond just making a crew visit though, having an understanding of the work being performed in order to correct the at-risk behaviors or conditions and having the courage to say something when you see something is important. Having an abundance of safety oversight tends to address safety concerns more promptly and when trends of at risk behaviors are noticed or events happen, they are also promptly addressed. I'm not saying that safety oversight doesn't happen back at our normal work locations, but because of the way the travel teams are assembled, safety oversight is performed more frequently.

Planning and assessing has always been a key component to being efficient or more importantly preventing a significant event. This is also prevalent when rendering mutual assistance. Before the crews are given assignments during mutual assistance, there are individuals out head of the crews, assessing. Proper planning and/or an assessment of a job makes sure the proper tools, equipment, materials and resources are

in place which helps eliminate the crew from taking short cuts, performing at risk behaviors or “work arounds” to get the job done. At home, planning and assessing is a major part of our culture. But there are times when we aren’t afforded the luxury to plan, especially during emergency events. In such times, it’s critical that we are more methodical in how we perform our task(s).

As you can see from the answers to the question, we can see the environment that is created between normal work and mutual assistance work. Keep in mind, these assignments usually last less than a month at a time and it is easier to keep up that environment over a shorter period of time versus a longer one. And even through the mutual assistance in Puerto Rico lasted for three months with crews working in the field, each month there were personnel changes to the make-up of the crews & management and also the work locations & terrain changed often, which help keep the focus up over those months.

I believe the same success we experienced on our mutual assistance assignments can also carry over to our normal work locations, only if we carry that same mindset when we are out of our comfort zone. Our mindset seems to change when we get into routines, do repetitive tasks, experience the same conditions, see the same hazards, work with the same individuals, drive in the same area and when we are rewarded with an event free outcome majority of the time. Regardless if you’re on a mutual assistance assignment or on an assignment at your work location, the one constant through all of this...is YOU. I have said it before that you and the person that is working beside you can have the biggest impact on your safety than anything else. Safety oversight from those you normally don’t work with is important from time to time, but the best form of safety oversight should come from being your “brother’s keeper” amongst your teammates. Some jobs will be planned in advance while others will not. An assessment needs to be completed despite how dire the situation is. The assessment needs to continue through the whole job and not just at the beginning. Even though our actions are correct, they could create other issues that could lead to a significant event. This is why having an understanding of situational awareness is critical. It’s not just the situation we are faced with at the beginning of the job but also the situations that are created as the job progresses. When we install or remove jumpers or grounds, energize or de-energize equipment, perform an electrical test, etc. doesn’t the situation of our job change? I can’t help but be reminded from a previous safety review I wrote, about the 19 Hotshots that lost their lives during the Yarnell Hill wildfire out in Arizona. The

leading cause to this tragic event was that the crew lost their situational awareness when they became desensitized to the environmental conditions affecting the fire.

In closing, our intentions are never to cause an event or get injured. A majority of the time good behaviors are being performed because if they weren't, we would see a lot more events. But in this business, we can't afford to have good behaviors a majority of time.....it needs to be all of the time. You have got to have a mindset in which an individual believes what has happened to others could happen to them. A mindset in which there's constant verification instead of assumptions. A mindset in which routine tasks aren't routine because there is always something different each time I perform them. A mindset of just because I have performed this task many times before without incident doesn't mean something couldn't happen this time. I know there are certain situations that make it very easy to predict an event is going to happen before it does, but most of time we aren't afforded such a luxury. But just imagine if you could look into the future and you could see yourself or one of your teammates having an event before it happened...there is no question what type of mindset you would have to prevent the event. So the question you need to ask yourself is...will I be able to pick the appropriate moment to apply the type of mindset needed to prevent an event?

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