

Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Q & A Safety Message

Q: How high can we stack poles in a pole yard? I can't find any references in OSHA or ANSI C2/the National Electrical Safety Code. Is there a standard?

A: Your question provides us with an example of when a standard governing our industry is not necessarily found in the National Electrical Safety Code, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.269 (General Industry) or OSHA 1926 Subpart V (Construction).

What you will find is that there is no specific standard for pole piles; the rules for stacking/storage of materials are the same for every industry. Those rules are found at OSHA 1910.176 and 1926.250, in particular 1926.250(b)(9) for "cylindrical materials."

The objective is safety in storage, access and handling as each of the rules for materials requires that they be stacked, racked, blocked, interlocked or otherwise secured – such as using chocking systems – to prevent sliding, falling or collapse.

OSHA does not detail, and for practical purposes could not detail, what would constitute safe storage in any specific way. The employer must make and be able to defend the storage and handling arrangements as safe following those general rules for storing materials.

There are no particular statistics, but injuries occurring on pole piles seem to be the caught-between variety, usually when moving poles. So, training and procedures should be guiding any pole storage areas. It's more detailed in the 1926 Construction standard, but OSHA's expectation is clear: Training or signage is required as to the modes of material controls; height limits of stacked materials for the competent design of pole-pile controls; and access to and handling of materials added to and removed from the storage pile.