

Our Mission_ To Be One Unified Voice

ESOURCE NEWSLETTER

Confessions of a Complacent Lineman

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IMEA
INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
SINCE 1941

Who We Are

The Indiana Municipal Electric Association (IMEA) is a service organization formed over 84 years ago. IMEA is a forum for municipal utilities all across Indiana to pool resources for effective representation and continuing education, both of which are vital for survival in a dynamic industry.

What We Do

- Education & Networking
- Safety & Training
- Mutual AId
- DOL Journeyman Apprentice Lineworker Program
- Annual Business Meeting & Vendor expo
- Public Relations, Member Directory
- Operation and Management

CONTACT US

765.366.5506
176 W. Logan St. #225 Noblesville, In. 46060
www.imea.com

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Confessions of a Complacent Lineman

If you have been working in the same role for a while, you know your job. People look up to you because you know what you're doing. They count on you to get the job done the right way. You have confidence in what you do, too. But have you noticed yourself taking a few shortcuts lately, telling yourself, "I've done this work every day for years – I know what I'm doing"? If so, it may be time to rethink things. It's exactly that kind of complacency that got me in trouble.

In early 2005, I was a lineman on a one-man service truck. I had been a journeyman for 20 years, so I was pretty comfortable with my skills. My main responsibilities were to catch all trouble, run temporary and permanent services, and work on streetlights. The district I worked in was very large; it took about 90 minutes to drive from one end to the other. One day, I had an order to tap up a service and set 10 meters on a condominium complex in Edisto Beach, South Carolina, which was at the far end of our service territory. The UG service was a parallel 300-MCM single-phase service. The line crew out of my base yard had been there the day before to run the service, make up the gang can and put the lugs on the transformer side of the service. Since there was no city approval when they ran the service, they did not heat it up. My job was to tap it up and set the meters. The approval had come in during the late afternoon the day before.

s soon as I pulled up to the job, I got a call from dispatch that we had a trouble call at the other end of our service area. There was no one else available, so I said I'd take the call as soon as I got the Edisto Beach order done.



The Incident

After I ended the phone call, I proceeded to open the UG transformer. The parallel service looked to be properly marked with colored tape. I then checked the meter can, which also looked OK. Since I was in a hurry and my friends from the crew did the marking, I decided not to ohm it out to check if all of the service conductors matched up in polarity.

The area was full of activity, with approximately 20 people finishing up construction on the condo buildings. I connected the service to the neutral spades. I then connected one of each side of the parallel service to the secondary spades, making sure the other end was isolated because it would also come hot as soon as its matching conductor was heated up. I then went to connect the other sides to the hot spades. As soon as the lug hit the spade, there was a huge flash and I fell backward. When I landed, I felt something burning my arm. I ripped off my rubber gloves to see a red-hot piece of metal down in one of my gloves, burning my arm. People were running over to me, asking if I was OK. I could smell hair burning. When I reached up to touch my mustache, it was almost gone. I couldn't see out of my safety glasses, so I took them off – they were completely pitted up. I also took a look at my hard hat; it had been white, but the front was now black. I then came to the realization that the markings on the service had been wrong. (Continued, Page3).

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Soon an ambulance arrived. I had made it through with some minor burns to my face and a second-degree burn on my arm where the hot ember had fallen into my rubber gloves. The biggest thing hurt was my pride. Everybody on that job site had seen or heard what happened. I called my supervisor and relayed the incident to him; he pulled somebody off another job to send them to catch the other case of trouble. I told him I would finish the job I was doing before heading back to the barn.

I had a 40-minute drive back to think about what had happened. In my mind, it was the line crew's fault – they had set me up and marked the cables wrong. When I saw the crew, they knew I was angry and told me it was an apprentice who had made a mistake with the markings. I beelined straight toward him. I was stopped by the crew foreman, who asked what I was doing. I replied that the apprentice had screwed up and that I'd gotten injured because of it. The foreman then asked me, "Spooner, did you ohm the wire out before you tapped it up to make sure everything was OK?" I told him that I had not, but it was still the apprentice's fault. The foreman looked me right in the eye and said, "Hold on a minute, you are at fault just as much as he is. You didn't double-check for yourself. He is just learning, and you know better." The foreman's words rang true; it was partially my fault. If I had followed the proper procedure, I would have caught the error. I was in a hurry to get to the trouble call, so I got lazy and made a shortcut. I was complacent. I walked away to calm down because I knew the foreman was right.

Summary

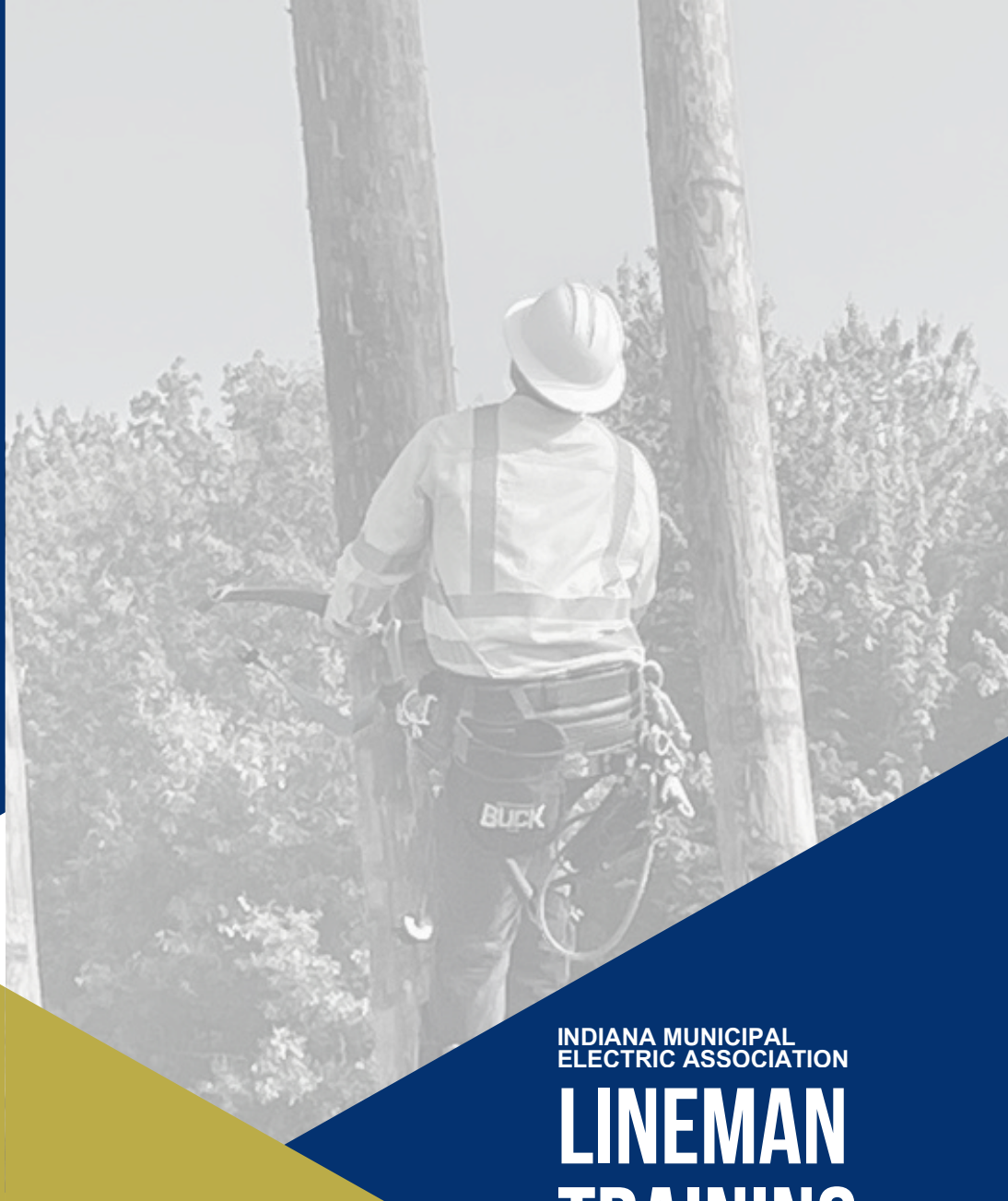
In our business, complacency can kill. I was lucky to only get small flash burns from a secondary as a result of my own act of complacency. The result would have been much worse if primary voltage had been involved. I hope you will learn from my mistake and follow all safety rules and work procedures as they are written. Most safety procedures were written in blood, and all of them exist for a reason. Today is a new day, so you still have a chance to change your ways. And if you won't do it for yourself, do it for your family and your fellow co-workers.

About the Author: David Spooner has worked in the utility industry since 1979, first as a lineman in South Carolina and now for a utility in Hawaii. His focus is keeping employees safe and helping them expand their leadership skills. He can be contacted via LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/davidaspooner/.



WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE IMEA LINEMAN TRAINING INSTITUTE

- Better Student-to-Instructor Ratio at 10:1 versus larger schools
- Each lineman instructor has at least 20+ years of experience
- Diverse instructor staff. Many of our linemen have not only over 30 years' experience but are well versed in substation, overhead distribution, underground utility construction, and transmission.
- Our instructors are patient, knowledgeable, constructive, and collaborative with students-not adversarial.
- In-house FULL CDL training and testing facilities. This cannot be emphasized enough as obtaining a CDL is critical to job placement, and IMEA makes obtaining a CDL very easy and affordable versus other programs. MOST schools will help you only obtain the permit versus earning the entire CDL. We do ALL of the training and TESTING in-house, on-site.
- Job placement services and career planning services.
- IMEA is a Non-Profit Organization, unlike other schools so we can provide the same training at a significantly lower cost.
- On-site lodging.



INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LINEMAN TRAINING INSTITUTE

Indiana Municipal Electric Association
Lineman Training Institute
Saint Joseph College Campus
1027 S. College Ave.
Rensselaer, IN. 47978
Contact Us
765.366.5506
IMEA Executive Director
Duane Richardson
Email: Duane@imea.com

Enrollment packages available.
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OUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Personal Protection Equipment and Procedures

Students will learn about safety working procedures and personal protection equipment.

Electrical Systems

Students will learn the basics of the entire electrical system from generation through transmission, distribution, and conversion.

Basic Electricity

The students will be taught the fundamentals of practical and mathematical application of Direct Current and Alternating Current.

Transformers

Students will learn how and why transformers are used, banked, energized and the various configurations of both Delta and Wye.

Personal Protective Grounding

Students will learn how and why companies work on transmission and distribution lines as well as all equipment and methods used when working.

Rigging And Knot Tying

Students will learn how to tie specific knots, splice rope and learn the proper use of various ropes, slings, block and tackle.

Why Us?

Are You Ready To Begin Your Career Ahead Of Your Competitors?

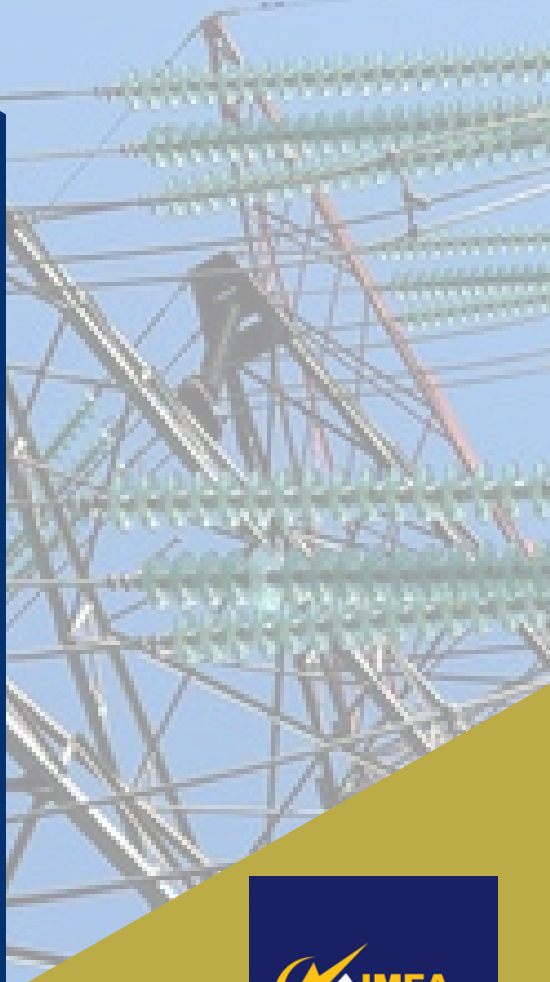
Our lineman school program will allow you to begin your career ahead of all the rest. Our students have experience performing the jobs of a lineworker, as well as obtaining professional knowledge of the industry while they proceed through our program. Our students are well equipped to stand out from the interview to the actual job. Our program will provide an outlet for electric companies to search for new qualified applicants.

Our students will be able to enter the industry with the technical skills that their employers can't pass up!

Do you want to learn from Experienced and Knowledgeable Linemen?

The lineman school instructors at IMEA Lineman Training Institute have extensive real-world experience in power generation, transmission and distribution. Their exceptional understanding of the industry and what companies are looking for makes our program a cut above other school. Our students will have hands-on experience in the trade and be coached in problem-solving skills in order to help them excel in their work.
Do you want to be able to graduate and have the opportunities for immediate positions anywhere? Then this trade is the right career for you. IMEA Lineman Training Institute provides its lineman school graduates with a listing of municipalities that will be useful in your search. Our instructor's connections with the leaders of the trade will also give the students of IMEA Lineman Training Institute the upper hand at finding a career. Our students will be trained, not only to look for the job, but to find jobs. A career planning class is required to help our students create a resume and learn to find their own jobs.

So is it what you're looking for?



Indiana Municipal Electric Association
IMEA Lineman Training Institute
Duane Richardson
765.366.5506
Mailing Address
176 West Logan St. #225
Noblesville, IN. 46060
Our Location
1027 S. College Ave.
Rensselaer, IN. 47978

IMEA MEMBER SERVICES & RESOURCES

- Education & Networking
- Safety & Training
- Legislative, Regulatory, and Limited Legal Assistance
- Lineman Apprentice Skills Trainin
- Mutual Aid
- DOL Journeyman Lineworker Apprentice Program
- Annual Business Meeting & Vendor Expo
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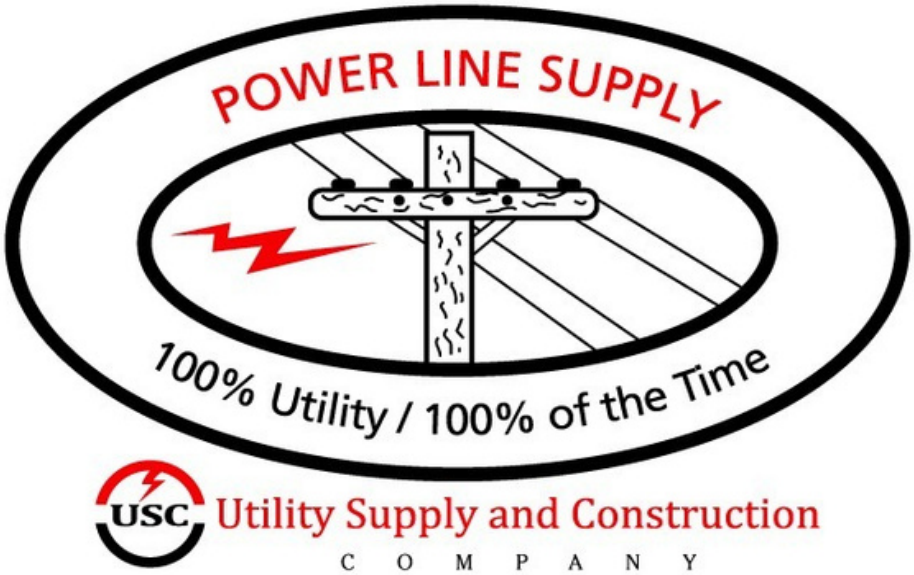


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Mike Coomes
SeniorRegionalSalesManager
(317) 281-5561

Mark Nuce
AccountManager
Northern Indiana/NW Ohio
(317) 417-7325

Jeff Carls
AccountManager
(319) 660-9893

Jim Garbison
TechnicalSolutionsConsultant
(317) 476-1657

Brad Means
TechnicalSolutionsConsultant
(231) 872-5419

Cole Miller
TechnicalSolutionConsultant
(317) 734-7357