

Emergency response near miss report



Date of Incident: Sept. 7, 2016 0932
Type of incident: Equipment fire/explosion
Equipment Involved: Pad-mounted transformer
Responder: Fire department
Area of concern: Risk of injury while accessing energized, high-voltage equipment

Points of concern

- Fire department cutting locks on high voltage equipment.
- Opening and accessing damaged equipment that could be energized, potentially injuring firefighters.
- Not remaining on site to keep bystanders away until PSE responders arrive.

Incident summary

On Sept. 7 at approximately 0940, PSE servicemen were dispatched to investigate a power outage. When they arrived on the scene, they found a damaged transformer marked off with yellow fire line tape. While they assessed the damage, bystanders told them the fire department had been there earlier when smoke was seen coming from the transformer. Bystanders reported that the fire crew had cut the lock on the transformer and opened the lid to inspect the interior. Inside, a 7,200-volt connection (“elbow”) had blown-off and was hanging near other exposed and energized connections. Fire personnel closed the lid, taped off the equipment and left the scene.

Hazard assessment—best practices

- Contact PSE immediately if equipment appears to be damaged or faulty.
- Assume all electrical equipment is energized or may become energized at any moment.
- Do not open doors, lids or covers and expose the interior of the equipment.
- Never attempt to extinguish any fires involving electrical equipment until it has been de-energized.
- Remain at least 10 feet away from underground high voltage equipment showing signs of fire or damage.



Transformer with lid open, exposing an energized 7.2kV elbow.