

Man thought he was 'going to die' after electric shock from overhead powerline

- Dramatic CCTV footage captures moment tree surgeon suffers electric shock.
- He had been part of team of three clearing vegetation on busy road in Wiltshire.
- Lighting tower he was pushing made contact with 11,000 volt overhead powerline.

CCTV shows the dramatic moment a tree surgeon suffered a powerful electric shock from an overhead powerline while carrying out maintenance to hedges on a busy road near Royal Wootton Bassett.

Shortly after midnight on 19 January 2024, Joshua Pocknell was working as part of a team of three on the A3102 when the mobile lighting tower he was pushing made contact with an overhead powerline.

The 26-year-old described the moment the lighting tower hit the overhead powerlines and that he 'couldn't let go of it'.

"My whole body locked and I felt hot and cramping, he said.

"I could hear the electricity in my head and thought I was going to die.

"I hit the floor and passed out, still cramping.

"I later discovered a hole had burnt through my arm and hip all the way to the bone."

He had sustained life-threatening injuries and was rushed to hospital, where he spent the next five weeks.

"My injuries were complex and challenging and there were five or six different surgeons involved in my treatment, he added.

"I still experience considerable pain and strange bodily sensations, including nerve pain and itching.

"This incident has torn the life from beneath me and I don't think I will be able to return to the job that I used to love."

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found employer Upton Specialist Tree Services had requested a permit to carry out the work of a night time from Wiltshire Council. It had been decided to do

the work after dark due to the needs of traffic flow as the A3102 acted as a diversion for M4.

However, the company had failed to adequately plan for or risk assess the dangers posed by overhead power lines. The company did not implement suitable control measures, such as barriers, instruction or training in operating the mobile lighting tower. Overhead powerlines had not been properly assessed or controlled,

particularly following the change to night time working requiring the use of a mobile lighting tower.

HSE guidance states that employers must identify and assess the risks from overhead power lines, particularly where equipment capable of reaching them is used. Workers should be provided with suitable information, instruction and training on the safe use of such equipment, including maintaining safe clearance distances. Work should be properly planned, supervised and reviewed if working methods change. Further guidance is available on our website – [Overhead power lines – HSE](#).

Upton Specialised Tree Services Ltd, of Horton Heath, Wimborne, pleaded guilty to the charge of breaching Regulation 14 of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 by virtue of Regulation 3. The company was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £6,237 in costs at Bristol Magistrates' Court on 1 May 2026.

HSE inspector Tom Preston said:

“Joshua is lucky to be alive.

“Overhead electrical power lines present extreme risks to workers, but the risks can and must be controlled.

“Work near overhead power lines should only be carried out where it can be done safely, following a suitable risk assessment, the use of barriers or safety zones, and proper training on the equipment being used.

“In this case, a worker sustained severe injuries in a traumatic incident for all concerned that was entirely preventable.

“HSE will take action against those who fail to take the steps necessary to protect people at work.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Karen Park, Rowena Goodwin as the prosecution advocate and Gabrielle O'Sullivan as the paralegal officer.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.

2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here – [Overhead power lines – HSE](#).
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).