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Window Washer Dies From Orinda Power Line Accident

ORINDA (BCN) — A man who suffered serious burns in an electrical accident in Orinda earlier this month died early Wednesday morning, according to the Santa Clara County medical examiner's office.

Jose Herrera, a 52-year-old San Jose resident, was one of two men washing windows at a building at 25 Orinda Way on June 5 when the aerial platform they were standing on touched a high-voltage power line.

The jolt from the 115,000-volt line resulted in second- and third-degree burns across the majority of the victims' bodies, Moraga-Orinda fire Battalion Chief Randy Trumpf said.

Herrera and the other man were retrieved from the platform and taken by medical helicopter to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, where Herrera passed away at about 2:30 a.m. Wednesday, hospital spokeswoman Joy Alexiou said.

The other worker was in critical condition in the days after the accident, but has since improved and is now considered in serious condition, Alexiou said.

The two men were employed as window washers with Santa Clara-based Delta Window Cleaning, according to Krisann Chasarik, spokeswoman for the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health.

Chasarik said the company has not been cited in connection with the case.

The accident happened in the same area where the Orinda Farmers' Market was taking place that day.

Live power lines fell, preventing authorities from accessing the victims' platform to rescue them until about 40 minutes after the initial report.

"We made sure it was safe before this type of attempt was made," PG&E spokesman Blair Jones said. "Any time when you're in proximity to power lines, you have to take the utmost caution to make sure no further injuries occur."

Because of the public nature of the accident and the serious injuries suffered by the victims, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District held a community meeting on June 10 to discuss the incident response and address feelings citizens might have experienced.

Fire officials also set up a booth at the June 12 farmers' market to provide information to those who were unable to attend the meeting.

The fire district has posted an informational summary report about the incident on its website, www.mofd.org.

The report concluded, "This incident had an extended and difficult rescue due to the seriousness of electrical emergencies and the potential for additional injuries or death. Crews on scene, as well as other responding agencies, provided for a safe and efficient environment under very challenging circumstances."

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By s posted Thu Jun 24 2010 5:40:48 PM

The rescuers have a very difficult job. Let's give PG&E credit to make sure it was safe for the fire department rescue team to get to the two victims to the hospital. If I was the victims family, I would very appreciative for the efforts to have done everything under their powers.

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