



Communication, Clarity and Accident Prevention

A lack of clear communication or a miscommunication can have dire consequences, especially in an industrial/commercial setting. Proper communication is more than just answering the question that has been asked; it is recognizing the question that was meant to be asked.

An example of this came from an electrocution incident that I investigated. A contractor was preparing to change the oil in a large transformer at an industrial facility. Before proceeding with the task he asked the plant engineer if the transformer was energized. The plant engineer replied that it was not energized. The answer he provided was correct based on the question asked. While on top of the transformer one of the contractor's tools came into contact with an energized conductor that was routed above the transformer. This unfortunately ended with a fatality.

How could this have been prevented? The plant engineer answered the question truthfully as it was worded. But the question was incomplete. The contractor needed to know if it was safe to be working above the transformer. Not only did he need to know that the transformer was not energized, but he needed to be aware of any live conductors within his working space. A poorly phrased question, combined with a truthful but incomplete answer had dire consequences.

When evaluating an industrial accident, it is important to have a full and complete understanding of all the events leading up to the accident. As the above incident illustrates, it would have been easy to blame the accident solely on the contractor and his negligence. However, the full story revealed that multiple parties could share the blame for this incident.

Remember your forensic specialists at Pyro-Technical Investigations are available for all of your investigative needs, including, but not limited to electrical and mechanical accidents that may occur in a residential or commercial/industrial setting. Contact us at 800.377.1352 or info@ptiforensic.com for more information and to discuss your specific needs.