

# Power Line Accidents on New York Construction Sites

## NYC Attorneys Who Fight for Injured Workers and Their Families

Power lines run through almost every New York construction site, though they rarely get the attention that scaffolds, cranes, and heavy machinery do. But when something goes wrong, workers can be left suddenly fighting for their lives after a violent electrical shock. When live overhead or underground lines intersect with fast-paced building, road, or infrastructure work, a single misstep can lead to a serious [electrocution accident](#).

The attorneys at [Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano LLP](#) have seen how power line electrocution on construction jobs is almost never a random event. It's usually the last link in a chain of preventable safety failures.

## Why Power Line Electrocution on New York Construction Sites Happens

On New York construction sites, electrical injuries often come from tools, temporary wiring, or faulty equipment, but power line accidents are different because they often involve higher voltages, elevation risks, and multiple layers of responsibility.

State regulators and safety agencies treat these events as especially serious because contact with live lines can be instantly fatal or permanently disabling, even when a worker never actually touches the wire and the current arcs through the air.

Several recurring patterns show up when workers are hurt by contact with overhead or underground lines:

- **Overhead crane and boom operations near lines:** Mobile cranes, concrete pump trucks, and cherry pickers can swing into distribution lines that run along streets, rail lines, or building fronts when lift paths and clearances aren't carefully planned and monitored.
- **Ladders and scaffolds in tight urban spaces:** Workers carrying or extending metal ladders, or erecting scaffolds on narrow sidewalks, can get dangerously close to lines that cross from pole to building, especially in older neighborhoods where clearances are already tight.
- **Excavation and underground utility work:** Backhoes, trenchers, and laborers may strike unmarked or poorly marked underground cables during street openings, foundation work, or utility upgrades, bringing high-voltage power straight into the trench.

## What New York Law Requires Around Electrical Hazards and Power Lines

New York gives construction workers unusually strong legal protections compared to many other states, including specific Labor Law sections and detailed Industrial Code rules that

address electrical hazards and work near power lines. These laws matter because they shift the focus away from blaming individual workers and toward the owners and contractors who control the site and make the key safety decisions.

Some of the most important legal protections include:

- **[Labor Law 200](#) General Safety Duty:** Owners and contractors must provide a reasonably safe place to work, which includes taking reasonable steps to identify and control known electrical hazards on and around the site.
- **[Labor Law 240](#) Working at Heights:** When an electrical event leads to a fall from a ladder, roof, scaffold, or lift, this statute can support a claim against the owner or general contractor if proper fall protection and safe devices weren't provided.
- **[Labor Law 241](#) Section 6 and The Industrial Code:** Section 241(6) requires compliance with specific safety rules in the New York Industrial Code, including the electrical hazard provisions in [12 NYCRR 23-1.13](#), which are often central in power line accidents.

Industrial Code 23-1.13 treats every power line near a construction, excavation, or demolition site as energized unless a qualified representative of the line's owner confirms otherwise, and it requires employers to determine voltage levels, warn workers about locations and hazards, and either de-energize or guard circuits where workers may come into contact. It also calls for utility notification when work will occur within a certain distance of live overhead lines and requires that employees who may come near those circuits be protected through de-energizing, grounding, or effective insulation.

### **How Safety Failures Lead to Power Line Contact**

Power line electrocution rarely comes from a single mistake; it typically reflects a series of safety breakdowns that start days or weeks before anyone is hurt. Understanding this pattern is important, because it shows why these incidents are so preventable when the law is followed.

Common failures that we see in these cases include:

- **Planning and pre-job failures:** Employers and contractors sometimes start crane work, siding projects, or excavation without a detailed hazard assessment that maps overhead and underground lines, verifies voltages, or considers whether lines can be shut down or insulated.
- **Onsite control and communication breakdowns:** Even when everyone knows lines are nearby, crews may work without physical barriers, danger signage, or designated spotters to maintain minimum clearances, especially on congested city streets or rail-adjacent sites.

- **Training and supervision gaps:** Workers often don't get clear instructions on how close they can safely work, what to do if a line is contacted, or how serious arc hazards can be even without direct contact, and supervisors may prioritize speed over safe methods.

## **Types of Injuries from Power Line Electrocutation**

High-voltage contact is different from an ordinary shock from a tool or household outlet. The current can burn deeply through the body, disrupt the heart and nervous system, and trigger secondary falls that multiply the damage. Doctors and safety agencies warn that the visible wound on the skin may only hint at what's going on inside, where muscle, blood vessels, and organs can be severely injured.

In power line construction accidents, workers often suffer:

- **Severe electrical burns and internal damage:** High-voltage currents can create deep entry and exit wounds, destroy soft tissue, damage nerves, and cause muscle breakdown that threatens kidney function.
- **Cardiac and respiratory complications:** Strong electrical shocks can lead to heart arrhythmias, cardiac arrest, and breathing problems that may require emergency resuscitation and intensive care.
- **Falls and trauma from height:** A worker on a roof, scaffold, or cherry picker who gets shocked can lose balance or be thrown by muscle contractions, leading to broken bones, spinal injuries, or head trauma in addition to the electrical damage.
- **Long-term disability:** Survivors may face amputations, chronic pain, limited mobility, neuropathy, and psychological effects like anxiety and PTSD, making it very difficult to return to demanding construction work.

## **Who May Be Responsible for a Power Line Construction Accident**

From a legal standpoint, power line electrocution cases often involve multiple parties, because many different entities share responsibility for site safety and electrical coordination. Our law firm's job is to sort out who had control, who made the key decisions, and who failed to follow New York's safety rules.

Potentially [responsible parties](#) can include:

- **Property Owners and General Contractors:** New York Labor Law 240 and 241 place nondelegable duties on owners and general contractors to keep construction areas reasonably safe and to comply with specific Industrial Code requirements, including those covering electrical hazards. If they allowed work to proceed under live lines without proper planning, warning, or protection, they can often be held liable.

- **Subcontractors and Site Supervisors:** Trade contractors and foremen control day-to-day operations and can bear responsibility when they ignore known hazards, skip spotters, or let workers use conductive equipment too close to lines.
- **Utility Companies:** When utilities fail to properly mark underground lines, delay in responding to required notices, or refuse to de-energize or insulate lines during high-risk work, they may share legal responsibility for the resulting injuries.
- **Equipment Manufacturers and Rental Companies:** In some cases, defects in cranes, lifts, or safety devices, or missing electrical hazard warnings, can support claims against companies that designed or supplied the equipment used near power lines.

## What Injured Workers and Their Families Can Recover

When a construction worker is injured or killed by contact with power lines in New York, workers' compensation usually covers some medical care and part of lost wages, but it doesn't fully address the long-term harm or hold negligent parties financially accountable. Through third-party claims against owners, contractors, utilities, or equipment companies, our law firm can pursue broader compensation that reflects the true impact of the injury.

Depending on the facts, damages may include:

- **Medical and rehabilitation costs:** Emergency care, surgeries, burn treatment, skin grafts, prosthetics, hospital stays, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and mental health support are often needed after high-voltage injuries.
- **Lost income and earning capacity:** Many electrical injury survivors can't return to the same heavy-duty construction roles, and some can't work at all; claims can reflect both past lost wages and future earning losses.
- **Pain, suffering, and loss of quality of life:** Severe burns, amputations, scars, chronic pain, and psychological trauma can change every aspect of daily living and deserve meaningful compensation.
- **Wrongful death losses:** If a worker doesn't survive, surviving spouses and family members may pursue damages for funeral expenses, loss of financial support, and the loss of guidance, companionship, and security the worker provided.

## What to Do After a Power Line Accident on a Construction Site

In the chaotic moments after an electrocution, it's hard to think clearly about legal rights, but [early steps](#) can make a significant difference in both health and future claims.

Workers and families should try to:

- **Get immediate medical care:** Even if someone feels “mostly okay” after a shock, complications can develop later, so thorough emergency evaluation and follow-up are important.
- **Report the incident and document what you can:** Notify supervisors, ensure an incident report is created, and, when safe, preserve contact information for witnesses and any photos that show the scene.
- **Avoid signing away rights:** Injured workers shouldn’t feel pressured to give recorded statements to insurance companies or accept quick settlements before speaking with legal counsel about third-party rights.

The attorneys at Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano LLP often talk with injured workers and families who feel overwhelmed by paperwork, calls from insurance companies, and financial pressure while they’re still grieving or recovering. Our law firm can walk through what happened, explain your legal options, and take steps to hold the right parties accountable so you can focus on healing. To get started, [contact us online](#) or call for a free consultation.