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## Pole Yard Accidents Are 100% Preventable.

This past week I had the opportunity to display our CMS Portable Pole Rack System at the Lineman's Rodeo Exposition in Kansas City, Kansas. This was the first time we had attended the lineman's rodeo as an exhibitor. According to the promotional information on the Expo it was to be attended by engineers, managers, safety managers and linemen. We had a couple of visitors to our booth that where managers, safety managers but most were lineman. At first, I was a little disappointed with the traffic but then as I talked to the lineman, the guys that are actually working in the field and have real-world experience in dealing with getting poles out of the yard and into the field, I changed my mind.



The photo to the left was part of our display describing "why be satisfied with this when you could have a safe, efficient and affordable CMS Portable Pole Rack System". This picture seemed to have caught the eye of a lot of the lineman as they passed our booth and a large number of them commented, "that looks like our pole yard". At this point I decided to talk to them about their experience. I was surprised at the number of guys that felt that working in the

pole yard and getting poles out was one of the most dangerous aspects of their work. In addition, they felt that they had no control over this dangerous and inefficient operation. Many explained that they wasted a lot of time finding and getting the pole, they needed to complete their work. Here are a few comments I jotted down from lineman. I have included their first name but not their last name or the company they work for.

***"Yeah several months ago one of my buddies was getting a pole out of a pile and it rolled and broke both of his legs" John***

***"We waste forty-five minutes to an hour finding and trying to get our poles loaded to get to the field, the company doesn't really care about safety, we just have to get the job done" Josh***

***"The safety guys tell us we're not allowed to climb on the pole piles, but the poles are all stacked up in a mess so we just have to do what we have to do to get the job done, so we climb on the pile anyway" Brandon***

This is just a sampling of the conversations we had with the lineman at the Expo. We only had one talking about broken legs but we had a lot talking about injured hands and fingers. Any accident or injury is absolutely unacceptable. They are preventable. Let me explain.

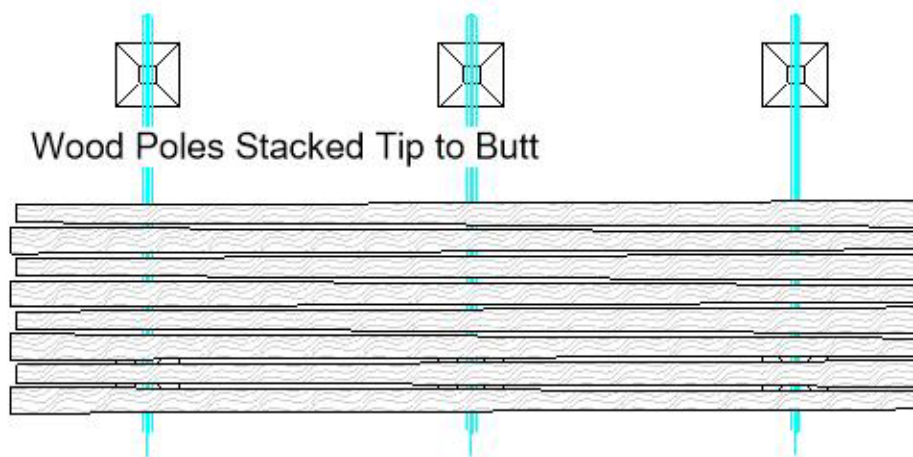
The most important part of having a safe pole yard is having well organized and stable pole piles. Lineman safety, loading and or unloading poles from pole piles, should be the primary concern. Best industry practices indicate, whether you're using the CMS Portable Pole Rack System or some other system, the safest and most stable pole piles are stacked only three layers deep. Poles should be stacked tip to butt on the racking system. This keeps the poles at a low profile for proper working and stacking

tip to butt prevents uncontrolled rolling. The biggest obstacle to this procedure is the pole manufacturers that deliver the poles. They do not want to take the time to stack them properly in a safe efficient manner.

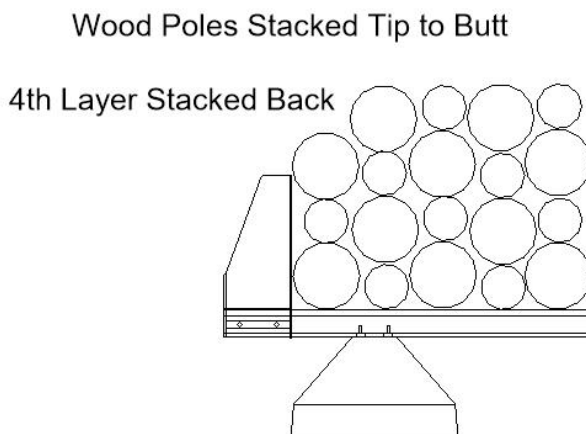
I was presented with this argument from a utility company in Eastern Tennessee and my comment was who's driving the train here. If the utility pole supplier wants to supply you with poles they will do what you require them to do so that you have a safe efficient pole yard. The utility requested I write a policy for them which is as follows:

***All poles delivered to the pole yard will be properly stacked on the racks in a tip to butt configuration, see Figure 1 below, with the poles properly centered in each Pole bunk to provide support. Poles will not be stacked any higher than four layers with any unsupported poles, by end pieces, stacked back to prevent rolling, see Figure 2 below.***

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



This particular utility wanted to store poles four high on their racks. This is not a problem for our CMS Pole Rack System we just don't find it to be as safe as stacking three layers high.

The next part is to provide proper training to your line crews on how to properly pick up and load poles off of the pole pile in whatever manner your company is using for this operation. Most utilities will utilize the pole truck and use cables to pick the poles off of the pile. In this scenario all work can be done in attaching chokers and cables to the poles from either end of the pile without having to climb on the poles. Whatever method is used proper training should be provided.

All of the comments we received from the lineman were greatly appreciated with some giving us more cause for concern than others. The one from Brandon above sparked my interest so I ask our safety director for an opinion. If the safety department of this utility have advised their lineman not to climb on the poles and an accident occurs while they are doing what they're not supposed to be doing, is it the lineman's fault under the OSHA regulations. It turns out that unless a viable alternative is given by the company to provide a safe way to remove the poles from the pile, OSHA may very well rule that it is the company's fault as gross negligence for not providing a solution to the problem. This company could face large OSHA fines for this negligence.

I think we can all agree that we have to do a better job of providing our employees and contractors in our pole yards a safer environment to work in. A single accident can cause more pain and suffering and ultimately costing more than any remedies we take for providing a safe working environment.

CMS Utility Services Inc. is the nation's leading expert in pole yard design and construction. CMS designs pole yards that are safe, efficient and affordable utilizing the proprietary "CMS Portable Pole Rack System." CMS Utility Services Inc. is ready willing and able to assist you in your pole yard needs.

**Written by:**

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