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Contact: Ted Fitzgerald

Phone: 617-565-2075

Email: fitzgerald.edmund@dol.gov

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US Labor Department's OSHA cites Verizon NY Inc. for repeat and serious safety violations following utility worker's death in Brooklyn

NEW YORK – The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited Verizon N.Y. Inc. for 10 alleged violations of workplace safety standards following the Sept. 14 electrocution death of an employee at a work site in Brooklyn at New Lots and Christopher Avenues. A field technician working in an aerial lift bucket was installing steel suspension strands when he came in contact with an energized power line.

An inspection by OSHA's Manhattan Area Office found that the employee and bucket were too close to the power line, the employee had not been adequately trained and he lacked insulated gloves. OSHA cited three repeat violations for these conditions, as Verizon had been cited for similar hazards in 2007 following the death of a worker at a Providence, R.I., work site. A repeat violation exists when an employer previously has been cited for the same or a similar violation of a standard, regulation, rule or order at any other facility in federal enforcement states within the last five years.

"Every workplace death is needless. A combination of effective training and safe work practices could have prevented this incident," said Kay Gee, OSHA's area director for Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. "The recurring nature of some of these hazards is disturbing. Verizon must take effective action to ensure that its workers are adequately protected so that this does not happen again."

The inspection also found that the steel suspension strands had not been grounded during installation, employees were not wearing hard hats, personal protective equipment had not been inspected and employees had not been adequately trained in safe work practices. These conditions resulted in citations for five serious violations. A serious violation occurs when there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known.

Two other-than-serious violations involve an incomplete and uncertified injury and illness log. An other-than-serious violation is one that has a direct relationship to job safety and health, but probably would not cause death or serious physical harm.

"To prevent hazards, employers should initiate and maintain effective illness and injury prevention programs in which they work with their employees to identify and eliminate hazards before anyone is harmed," said Robert Kulick, OSHA's regional director in New York.

The citations can be viewed at <http://www.osha.gov/ooc/citations/Verizon.pdf>. Verizon, which faces a total of \$140,700 in fines, has 15 business days from receipt of its citations and proposed penalties to comply, meet with OSHA's area director or contest the findings before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

To ask questions, obtain compliance assistance, file a complaint or report workplace hospitalizations, fatalities or situations posing imminent danger to workers, the public should call OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742) or the agency's Manhattan office at 212-620-3200.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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