Arc Flash at Amarillo, Mission Fire Invite Questions about Safety at ASARCO

Recent incidents at ASARCO’s Amarillo refinery and Mission Mine are bringing more unwanted attention to the company during our ongoing unfair labor practice strike.

Union Files OSHA Complaint over Arc Flash in Amarillo

Our union has filed an OSHA complaint over an arc flash incident at ASARCO’s Amarillo refinery that caused damage to company property. We understand that when re-establishing power after a planned shutdown, it was decided to first close the switch that supplied power to west bank of circuit breakers. About 30 seconds later, a sizzling noise was heard and the emergency lighting began to dim before a flash was seen. This event caused cables to overheat and melt and a transformer switch to be severely damaged.

This is not the first time the company has been put on notice for violations of lock-out/tag-out procedures. In February 2018, the Amarillo refinery received citations for violating procedures to control potentially hazardous energy and requirements to review the procedure annually.

Fire at Mission Mine

On Feb 19, 2020, over 15 emergency vehicles responded to a fire at Mission. According to reports from responding units, the fire was related to “Hot Work” with “Fire Watch” requirements.

It has been determined by the company the hose used for Fire Watch did not reach to the correct area as required. There are multiple MSHA standards and training requirements in place that need to be followed to prevent an incident like this from occurring.

Both of these events show reasons why our skills and experience are important and highlight deficiencies in operating procedures that we have brought—and will continue to bring—to the attention of the company and appropriate regulatory agencies.