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Book Review
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Murder by Electrocution By David MacCollum

Reviewed by Clifton A. Ericson II

For more than 60 years, the hazard of boomed equipment making contact with overhead power lines has been an ever-increasing source of wrongful injuries that maim for life or result in an extremely painful death. As engineers, we all know that to overcome predictable human error, we must implement design-based safety, rather than speculate that such behavior can be modified. For more than 50 years, power line proximity sensors and interlocks have been known to stop dangerous boom movement before the power line is struck, thereby eliminating the hazard. The use of insulation guards against the dangerous flow of electrical current should contact be made.

MacCollum's novel portrays how easily overhead contact accidents can happen and the devastating results that occur. This novel also shows how redundant elimination of the hazard and guarding against the flow of dangerous electrical current will reliably save lives. Strikingly vivid is how available engineering technology is aggressively rejected, while system safety comes to the rescue.

This book not only describes the boom hazard in great detail, but it also nicely weaves into the story much about liability cases and tort law. We tend to assume that liability cases are all excessive and simply about people trying to make money. This novel describes how the legal system is often abused in order to avoid implementing system safety.

In addition to being an interesting novel, I have to confess that I also learned quite a bit about electrical hazards, safety design features and how some parts of industry and society aggressively work at defeating safety.

The book is available for sale through the International System Safety Society, P.O. Box 70, Unionville, VA 22567-0070 USA Tel: 540-854-8630; email: systemsafety@system-safety.org; Website: www.system-safety.org.


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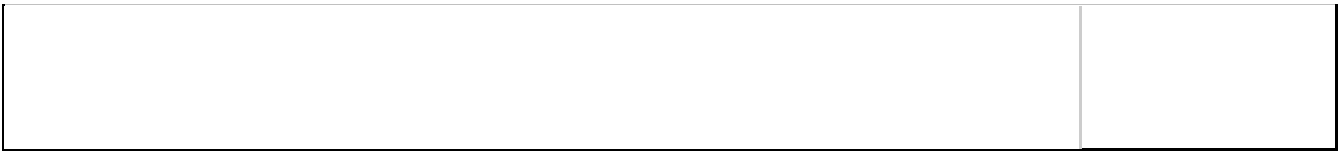
Instructor:
Dr. Nancy Leveson

Date:
June 18 – 22, 2012

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