



Engineering Sciences Section – 2008

C2 Wild Fires of Electrical Origin

Helmut G. Brosz, PE, Brosz & Associates, 64 Bullock Drive, Markham, ON L3P 3P2, CANADA*

Upon completion of this presentation, participants will better understand the cause of a wild fire of electrical origin. Examples of replication will be shown.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing the importance of forensic electrical engineering in the study of wild fires of electrical origin is essential in the litigation which invariably ensues.

Trees coming into contact with high voltage power lines can lead to power outages and pose a risk of ensuing wild fires. Vegetation contacting transmission lines was the contributing factor in a major power interruption resulting in the North-East blackout of 2003. In instances where tree contact causes fire in residential areas, the risk of property damage and potential fatalities is significantly increased. Vegetation management is an essential activity in order to reduce the risks.

This presentation will focus on the Cavedale fire of Glen Ellen, California, where a vegetation management company hired by a major utility neglected to trim certain trees in a timely manner which subsequently grew into power lines. The result was a fire that destroyed thousands of vineyard acres in wine country as well as some homes. Various experts often have opposing theories as to the cause & origin of wild fires.

Wild Fire, Electrical, Power Lines