

December 18, 1997

Chuck Woodings, Safety & Training Director
Anderson & Wood, Inc.
2120 Lanark
Meridian, Idaho 83642

Dear Mr. Woodings:

This letter is in response to your November 24, 1997 letter in which you asked for the definition of a qualified safety watcher. You were correct in your research of 1910.269 in that the standard does not require that a safety watcher be a "journeyman". Instead, the standard requires that a designated employee, other than the equipment operator, observe approach distances to exposed energized lines and equipment (1910.269(p)(4)(ii)). A designated employee is defined by 1910.269(x) as an employee (or person) who is designated by the employer to perform specific duties under the terms 1910.269 and who is knowledgeable in the construction and operation of the equipment and the hazards involved.

Your letter goes on and discusses what constitutes a qualified employee. While there are several references in the standard to a "qualified employee", and the training required, 1910.269(x) best defines a qualified employee as one who is knowledgeable in the construction and operation of the electric power generation, transmission, and distribution equipment involved, along with the associated hazards. The notes following the definition state that a qualified employee must have training (described in your letter) as required by paragraphs 1910.269(a)(2)(ii), unless the person is involved in on-the-job training and has demonstrated an ability to perform the duties safely, and is under the direct supervision of a qualified person.

In conclusion, your last question concerning whether your employees, who have been trained in and understand the operation of the bucket truck from the turret controls, are qualified safety watchers or not is a little confusing. The standard does not address such a thing as a "qualified" safety watcher. From what your letter says, it sounds like your employees should meet the requirements to be designated to observe the approach distance to exposed lines and equipment (1910.269(p)(4)(ii)). At the same time they may also meet the requirements to be qualified employees, as addressed elsewhere in the standard.

For further information please contact Mike Mitchell at 378-3272. You are also invited to see the OR-OSHA pages on the Internet at www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/index.html.

Sincerely,

Marilyn K. Schuster, Manager
Standards & Technical Resources Section
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division