



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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

Dear Mr. Woodings:

This letter is an update to your November 24, 1997 letter in which you asked for the definition of a qualified safety watcher. This interpretation was revised to reflect Oregon OSHA's October 9, 2015 adoption of the Electrical Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution standard in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) Chapter 437, Division 2, Subdivision RR (2/RR). These rules apply to 1910 and 1926 activities.

The standard does not require that a safety watch be a journeyman. Instead, the standard requires that a safety watch be qualified. This is from 437-002-2311(13)(a):

“A qualified safety watch must be provided in areas where inadvertent motions, movements, or tool use would violate Minimum Approach Distances (MAD). The safety watch's sole duty is to keep constant watch over persons working within the MAD, to warn them of danger, and to stop the work when necessary.”

While there are several references in the standard to a “qualified employee,” and the training required to be qualified for specific activities, 437-002-2324 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 as required by 437-002-2300(2)(b) or be an employee who is involved in on-the-job training and has demonstrated an ability to perform the duties safely at the level of his or her training and who is under the direct supervision of a qualified person.

Employees must meet the requirements prescribed in Division 2/RR to be designated to observe the approach distance to exposed lines and equipment as a safety watch, detailed in 437-002-2311(13). A safety watch may have no other duties while performing the safety watch function. Employees may also meet the requirements to be qualified employees for other specific job duties, as addressed elsewhere in the standard.

If we can be of further assistance, call Oregon OSHA's Technical Section at 503-378-3272. You are also invited to visit Oregon OSHA's website at www.osha.oregon.gov.

Sincerely,

Trena VanDeHey, Standards & Technical Resources Manager
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division