This dangerous situation can exist with any driver regardless of the type of truck or trailer, so everyone should read this message and remember the lesson. In fact, this very incident has occurred on two occasions within the recent past – one that resulted in personal injury and the other in property damage.

Tim has been a long haul driver for nearly twenty years and pulls dry vans for a well established regional carrier. One of the things he likes about his job is that his routes are varied. This allows him to see different places in this great nation and meet some interesting people. However, one night it was raining very hard and Tim needed to perform a turn-around because he a taken a wrong turn in one of these “different places.” He saw a large parking lot on his left so he proceeded to turn around. Because of the weather conditions and the fact that Tim had never been to this location before, he did not notice the tilting utility pole on the corner of the parking lot. The top of his van clipped the pole and pulled the live power lines onto the top of his tractor. Immediately his truck became energized with a lethal amount of electricity. Fortunately for Tim, the breaker on the power line switched and stopped the current, but only after his truck had been “zapped” with enough current to super heat the steering wheel and produce third degree burns to both of his hands.

Carl’s situation was different. He is a tri-axle dump driver for a local company that transports dirt, sand, rock, gravel and even asphalt. His area of operation is best described as local. But, the issue with dump trucks is the fact that they most often must back into the work space and then when they raise the dump bed and drive back out of the work space their overhead clearance requirement has changed. Carl had failed to remember this. His dump bed ripped out the customer’s telephone and cable lines. No one was injured because these lines are low voltage. However, Carl would probably describe the verbal counseling that he got from his boss as an injury!

REAL LIFE LESSON

Four things can be learned from these separate, yet similar, events. 1) Maintain a “sense of height” awareness for your rig and understand that it will change as the road surface changes (inclines, grades, bumps, curbs, etc.) and when you raise the bed. 2) Whenever possible, use a ground guide. 3) Treat all utility lines as if they are high voltage and lethal. Never assume that it is OK to “slide” under them with your vehicle or even to touch them with your hands if your vehicle does become entangled with them. 4) Understand that utility lines are supposed to be placed at certain and standard heights, but Mother Nature can cause poles to lean and lines to sag.