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Utilities Essay

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### Electric Linemen: The Overlooked Heroes

What job requires you to be on call 24-7, is necessary for day to day safety, and needs you to be well trained and always prepared? Despite what it sounds like, this job is not firefighting nor is it law enforcement. There are approximately 120,376 linemen working in the US, and despite the numbers the job is incredibly overlooked. Linemen are crucial to ensuring that electric services to homes and businesses are safe and reliable, an incredibly large task.

Picture it, everyday, all day, all over the country, lights are on, dishwashers are being run, appliances are being used, and all of this is working smoothly and safely. And yet, electricity is an incredibly dangerous force that can range from 12,500 volts to 35,000 volts in electric distribution, incredibly high considering that 50 volts can kill someone. There are 450,000 miles of powerline in the US and 90% of them are not covered in electrical safety insulation, only insulation against weather. So how is this all running smoothly with so many variables? The answer again is the electrical lineman.

Linemen work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, plus an on-call shift, in which they can be called to an emergency or work site at any time. They have to respond to issues with the power grid in all kinds of weather, commonly responding to issues caused by weather, often in the dark.

They must be physically fit and must be able to climb poles and work with high voltage at heights. Important electrical issues are quite common, as buildings have complex electrical systems. Hospitals, banks, and many other businesses rely on these electrical systems in order to conduct business. Even in homes, many people have electrical life support devices. In an emergency, linemen are crucial to saving lives. Even in emergencies in other locations, linemen are called in. This includes neighboring counties and cities, however it can be much farther. In just 1 year, over 60,000 linemen travel to the sites of hurricanes and tropical storms.

So why is this job not as well known?

Though it is an incredibly taxing job, many linemen enjoy their job thoroughly. "I guess looking from the outside it looks miserable, but to be honest it's a great satisfaction to be able to do this kind of work," said Kalen Sipes, a lineman for the Laurens Commission of Public Works in an article by the Municipal Association of South California. Many people who are interested in a position as a fireman are missing out on an opportunity to be a lineman. The similarities in an adrenaline rush of an emergency, and the ability to help save lives is the same in both. However, as a lineman, there is an opportunity (a necessity really) to continue education throughout their careers, taking classes and tests. It is actually a blend of both an engineering and a first responder job. The average salary of a lineman in the US is \$87,412 per year, though it varies per state, and can reach much higher numbers as you become more experienced. The occupation is growing by 2.94% each year, and there are now over 6,250 female linemen in the industry.

In conclusion, the job of the lineman is incredibly crucial to safety and an overlooked job in the US today. Constantly ready to help, constantly continuing education and training, linemen are key to the stability we need in our eclectic services. Through safety from high voltage, and safety in reliable electricity, lineman really are the secret super-heroes of the utility industry.

### Works Cited

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