

# 11-year-old electrocuted at sand pit

By Jessica Fargen  
The Independent

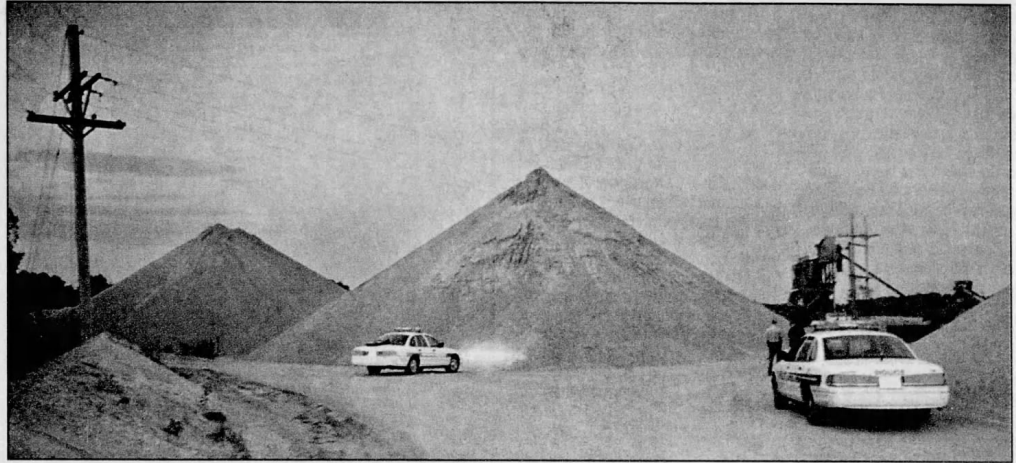
"They were little boys playing," is how Hall County Attorney Ellen Totzke explained why an 11-year-old Grand Island boy was electrocuted and died Wednesday night.

Ryan Pochop, 2323 Bellwood No. 198, and a 10-year-old boy were playing at a sand pit behind Fiesta Latina on South Locust Street when Ryan was electrocuted.

Ryan, who was a fifth-grader at Wasmer Elementary School, was sliding down a 25- to 30-foot-tall gravel pile when he came in contact with power lines. Gravel piles reached above the power lines in some spots.

Totzke said Ryan's companion saw him sliding toward the power line and tried to stop him. He ran to Ryan's home to get Ryan's mother, Ardyce Osbahr, after the accident.

Osbahr arrived at the scene before ambulances, sheriff's deputies, Grand Island po-



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Hall County sheriff's deputies and Grand Island police officers survey the scene where Ryan Pochop, 11, was electrocuted Wednesday while playing on a sand pile at Central Sand and Gravel, 2819 S. Locust St.

lice and the deputy county attorney arrived. Authorities were notified at 8:45 p.m.

"She came to the scene and attempted CPR on her son while she waited for paramedics to arrive," Totzke said.

Ryan, who would have been a sixth-grader at Barr Middle School this fall, was pro-

nounced dead at the St. Francis Medical Center emergency room.

Totzke said she did not know how the boys entered the sand pit. A fence surrounds at least part of the sand pit, she said, but even that can't always stop people.

"It's hard to stop little kids from climbing

fences," she said.

Totzke said health and safety inspectors will come to examine the sand pit, run by Central Sand and Gravel, as a result of the accident.

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# Electrocution: Second power line accident

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As far as he could tell, City Administrator Dale Iman said, the power lines themselves were not the problem.

"We have reviewed the situation, and there was nothing done by city utilities that would cause the problem that occurred," Iman said.

Ryan's death was the second time power lines have proved fatal for Grand Island youths in about two years.

Seven-year-old Jerry Anderson Jr. was playing with a friend on rooftops near Wheeler Avenue between Second and Third streets on June 1, 1996, when he was electrocuted after coming in contact with power lines. He was the son of Jerry and Valva Anderson of 612 N. Vine St.

"They were just being kids, being curious and going investigating," Totzke said in 1996 of Jerry Jr.'s death.

Totzke offered a similar explanation for why, in 1998, another child is dead because he got too close to power lines.

"Little boys tend to have a penchant for exploring and climbing."

## Just stay away from power lines, official says

By Jessica Fargen

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A Grand Island boy's death Wednesday was a reminder of the danger of getting too close to power lines.

City Utilities Director Gary Mader said avoiding contact with power lines is the only sure way to prevent electrocution.

He said power lines are up in the air because they are dangerous, and people can be electrocuted with even the quickest contact.

"The most important thing to remember is they are up on poles for a reason," Mader said.

Using the common sense rule of just staying away from power

lines is the best defense, he said. He suggested the following rules of safety around power lines.

- Don't raise poles or pipes if there's a chance they could touch power lines.

- Don't plant trees or build structures under power lines.

- If a power line is knocked down, don't go near it.

- Don't climb utility poles.

People who see any type of power line down, including utility and cable lines, should call the city's electrical control center at 385-5461, Mader said.

As for keeping children away from dangerous areas, Mader said he could not identify one particular area of the city that was more dangerous than another.

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## Ryan Pochop

Ryan T. Pochop, 11, of 2323 Bellwood Drive No. 193 died Wednesday, July 1, 1998, near his home.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Monday at Kleine Funeral Home. The Rev. Roger Ridley will officiate. Burial will be in the Grand Island City Cemetery.

Visitation will be from 3 to 8 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home.

Memorials are suggested to the **Ryan T. Pochop Memorial Fund.**

Ryan was born on Sept. 5, 1986, in Hastings to Paula Osbahr and Russell Pochop I. He moved to Grand Island at age 3 and attended Wasmer Elementary School. He would have been a sixth-grader this fall. He enjoyed football and other sports.

Survivors include his mother, of Grand Island; his father, of Omaha; one brother, Michael Pochop, and one sister, Jamie Osbahr, both of Grand Island; two stepbrothers, Tom Lodge and Russell Lodge, both of Lincoln; grandparents, Don and Ardyce Osbahr of Hooper, Milton and Jill Pochop of Fremont and Jerome and Edie Snitker of Hastings; and great-grandparents, Adella Koopman of Hooper, Myron Osbahr, William and Genevieve Pochop of Norfolk and Mrs. Oliver Snitker of Waukon, Iowa.



**Ryan Pochop**