

Safety Alert

January 2016



Safety near Power Lines

With many construction and road workers returning over the next couple of weeks to their workplaces after taking summer vacations, it is an appropriate time to reinforce the importance of being OHS vigilant and the essential need to respect the power of electricity when working in the vicinity of power lines.

Power lines are an integral part of outdoor landscape, which makes them easy to forget. With the sun in your eyes, trees in your line of vision or if you are watching something else, you may not see how close you are to power lines. Electricity-related deaths and incidents are preventable.

Be aware of what is above you and take extra care if your work involves:

- Using tall mobile plant/machinery, such as cranes, excavators and rotary hoes;
- Driving high vehicles such as graders;
- Raising the tipper trays of trucks, quad dogs in particular; and
- Climbing on top of mobile plant and vehicles such as water tankers.

When working with mobile plant and tall machinery, always:

- Identify all electrical and other workplace hazards for the intended high risk task before you start work on a related Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) signed by the workers;
- Ensure you are working outside 'No Go Zones';
- Monitor weather conditions. The height of power lines can change depending on weather conditions; they can sag 2-3 metres in hot weather and sway in strong winds;
- Electricity can arc or jump gaps. Mobile plant/machinery etc. don't actually have to touch the power lines for injury or electrocution to occur;
- Trucks and machinery are becoming bigger/taller but power lines still remain the same heights; and
- Ensure an appropriate stocked first aid kit is accessible along with a fully charged dry chemical fire extinguisher in the event of an electrical emergency.

'No Go Zones'

Ensure that you always:

- Never work within 3 metres of overhead power lines or poles;
- Use a trained spotter when working between 3 and 6.4 metres of power lines;
- Never work within 8 metres of power line towers; and
- Use a trained spotter when working between 8 and 10 metres of power line towers.

By working in a consultative, 'Safety First', pro-active approach we can prevent the wide spread suffering associated with electrical related injuries and incidents.

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