

Electrical safety and you Look up and live

Some things to consider about overhead powerlines



Powerlines are dangerous. They should be treated with extreme caution at all times.

As an employer or self-employed person you have an obligation under the Electrical Safety Act 2002 to ensure that persons performing work for your business or undertaking, involving contact with, or being near to exposed live parts, are electrically safe.

If your project involves the use of plant or equipment, including mobile cranes, concrete pumps, elevating work platforms or farming equipment which may come into contact with powerlines, you must take appropriate steps to fulfil your responsibility to protect against injury or death.

Therefore it is critical that you assess the work requirements in the planning stages before beginning work and take the necessary steps to minimise the risks involved with working near overhead powerlines.

These considerations should also be taken into account before submitting a development application.

When working around overhead powerlines

- Treat all powerlines as live.
- Follow the *Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 – Working Near Exposed Live Parts*.
- Look at the site and identify all risks.
- Assess the risk of injury to yourself and others.
- Maintain exclusion zone distances.
- Use risk treatment measures:
 - find a safer way to do the work
 - consult with the owner of the powerlines about the work, and do not commence any work before safety advice is obtained
 - make arrangements with the owner of the powerlines to relocate them
 - make arrangements with the owner of the powerlines to have them de-energised

- make arrangements with the owner of the powerlines to cover them with physical barriers
- appoint a safety observer.

Keep clear when working near exposed live electrical parts – maintain exclusion zone distances

You are not necessarily protected from an electrical incident just because you are not touching powerlines. **High voltage electricity can jump gaps!** The size of the gap electricity can jump (the arcing distance) increases with the voltage, so the higher the voltage, the bigger the arcing distance.

Exclusion zones

An exclusion zone is the minimum safe approach distance from an overhead powerline. You are required to keep all parts of your operation, including people, plant and vehicles, out of this zone. If there is a possibility of straying into the zone, you must adopt suitable control measures.

Exclusion zones vary according to the voltages and types of overhead powerlines, the type of plant or equipment being used near the powerline, and whether the operator is an authorised or instructed person in accordance with the *Electrical Safety Regulation 2002*.

For more details on exclusion zones, see Part 4 and Schedule 2 of the *Electrical Safety Regulation 2002*, which can be accessed through the 'Law and penalties' section of our website. See also the *Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 – Working Near Exposed Live Parts*, which is also available from our website.

For more information visit
www.electricalsafety.qld.gov.au
or telephone **1300 650 662**.

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