BEFORE ANYTHING RISKY. LOOK 360°

# Working safely around electricity
# Farming

Working near electrical infrastructure can be extremely dangerous and can cause serious injury or death. Public safety is a shared responsibility for Western Power and for the people who need to work near our network. When trees come into contact with powerlines, they can cause power failures, bushfires or serious accidents.

Farmers are very familiar with the land they are working on, often this familiarity can lead you to stop noticing the hazards around you, particularly electrical infrastructure which may be located on or around your farm. There are a number of ways in which this risk can be minimised to ensure you make it home safe.

This factsheet provides information about how to conduct your work to ensure you, your workmates and the community remain safe and the power remains on.

## Your duty of care

Working around electricity, whether underground or overhead, is high risk work. All workers have a duty of care to ensure that no person, plant or materials enter the danger zone of any electrical network asset. The danger zone is set out in the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations, 1996 - Reg 3.64.

Common tasks that could be dangerous:

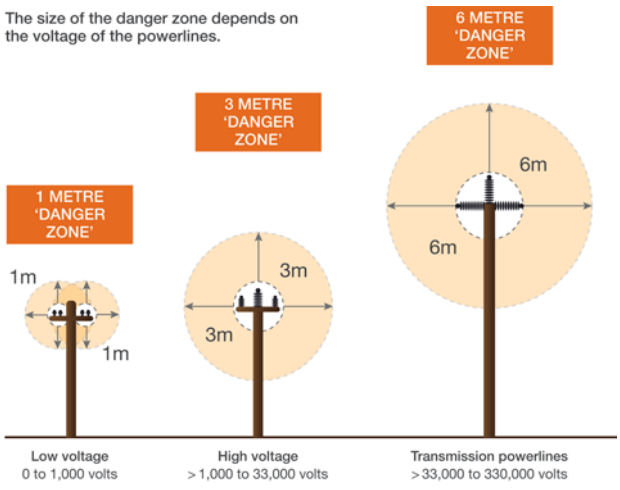
- Moving or operating irrigation pipes
- Using lifting or elevating plant or equipment
- Moving or relocating agricultural plant
- Transporting or moving structures e.g. grain silos
- Installing agricultural netting
- Ground based or aerial crop spraying.

## Danger zone

A danger zone is a specific area surrounding live electrical apparatus that ordinary persons, equipment and materials must not enter (prescribed by OSH reg. 3.64).

If your works enter the danger zone you put yourself at risk of injury and may be prosecuted and be liable for any damage to the network.

The danger zone should be applied in conjunction with the standards and regulations applicable to your industry. If a greater danger zone is stated you must adhere to those requirements.



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## Consider the risks

- Whether machinery with tall attachments will be driven through paddocks where overhead electric lines exist
- Whether tipper trucks, mobile silos, field bins, harvesters or other large rural machinery are operated or moved under or near energised overhead electric lines
- Whether long metallic irrigation pipes are moved or rearranged
- The location, height, arrangement and visibility of overhead electric lines and supporting structures
- Environmental conditions e.g. weather
- Site conditions e.g. terrain, ground surface and vehicular traffic
- The nature, size and shape of loads to be moved
- The setting up and packing up processes.

## Control measures

The most effective way to eliminate the hazard is to prevent people, equipment and materials from coming close enough to overhead electric lines resulting in direct contact or electrical arcing. To eliminate incidents consider:

- Contacting Western Power to de-energise or isolate the overhead line for the duration of the work
- Contacting Western Power to permanently relocate the overhead line away from your work area
- Moving plant or structures permanently away from overhead lines
- Using plant and machinery that is unable to reach the danger zone
- Erecting a physical barrier to prevent plant, equipment or a person entering the danger zone
- Use a safety observer if work will continue close to electrical infrastructure.

## Stubble burning

Stubble burning requires careful planning and constant monitoring as it can cause widespread damage and power interruptions if it gets out of control. Things to consider include:

- Check for overhead powerlines before starting work
- Clear vegetation from around the base of power poles to at least 1.5m
- Dampen the base of poles before and after stubble burning
- Do not rake wind rows beneath or next to powerlines or poles
- Have mobile fire units that are easily accessible should a stubble fire get out of control.

Follow general advice for all prescribed burns:

- Inform your local government fire control officer and neighbours prior to commencing
- Stay up to date with the latest weather information
- Check the fire danger rating for the area and whether any bans are in place
- Do not go ahead if conditions are hot, dry or windy or forecast to become so and do not take unnecessary risks.

## Harvesting and seeding

Harvesters and seeders are at high risk of coming into contact with powerlines. You can reduce this risk by following these steps:

- Check for overhead powerlines and poles before starting work
- Know the height and width of your machinery and have this information displayed
- If you haven't worked in a paddock for a while, check for any new infrastructure or electrical hazards
- Do not assume the height of overhead powerlines as the clearance may change throughout the day due to sag in hot weather or periods of increased power demand
- Do not harvest or seed when weather conditions are not suitable. Regularly check for updates
- Crops such as swathed canola coming into contact with powerlines may lead to a power interruption. Under no circumstances attempt to remove the obstruction. Report the incident to Western Power on 13 13 51.

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## What if machinery contacts overhead powerlines?

If machinery does make contact with powerlines, stay in the cab and phone Western Power for assistance on 13 13 51. Do not attempt to exit the vehicle until Western Power has determined that it is safe to do so. If the situation becomes dangerous and you have to exit the vehicle follow instructions below.

## What to do in a vehicle in contact with electricity

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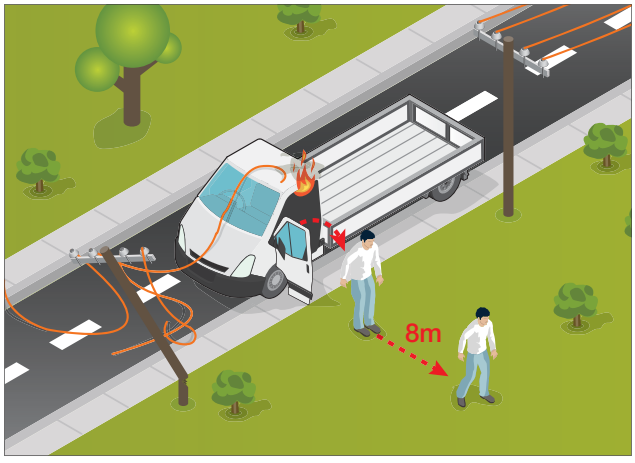
|---|---|
| 1 | **Stay in the vehicle.** Call 000 immediately. |
| 2 | If there's an immediate danger, like fire, and **evacuation is absolutely necessary**, access your escape route and check for fallen powerlines. |
| 3 | Exit the vehicle by jumping - make sure to land with both feet together. |
| 4 | When jumping, **don't touch the vehicle and the ground** at the same time. |
| 5 | **Once you've landed with both feet together (be careful not to stumble or fall), jump or shuffle with your feet together away from the vehicle.** |
| 6 | Move in this way until you are at least 8 metres away from the vehicle. **Do not go back.** |




## Accessing private property

Western Power is responsible for maintaining the safety of its network, and we sometimes need access to properties to inspect and maintain our assets. We will make every effort to contact you before starting any planned inspection or maintenance activity. This includes the inspection and maintenance of some vegetation near the network.

Go to our website and search for 'poles in paddock' to register your details so we can contact you before accessing your land and minimise disruption.

## Agricultural aerial safety

Powerlines pose a significant risk to low flying aircraft because they can be difficult to distinguish from the landscape, even in clear conditions.

Assume that powerlines are present in rural, semi-rural and populated areas. Not all powerlines in areas of high aerial activity will have visual markers.

Powerlines are built in many configurations and the height and ground clearance of powerlines will vary. The height of powerlines from the ground can also vary due to sag in hot conditions or in periods of increased power demand and may not offer the same clearance as previously measured in all weather.

We recommend that before flying you:

Plan ahead and familiarise yourself with the location of powerlines and other obstacles such as telecommunications towers and poles in the area

Always undertake a new job risk assessment of the area each time you fly as new infrastructure may have been added or moved.

## Safety observer

A safety observer should alert workers and crane or plant operators when approach distances are likely to be breached or other unsafe conditions arise. A safety observer must be able to communicate effectively at all times with crane and mobile plant operators.

Safety observers should monitor the work activity and have the authority to stop the work at any time and be competent enough to implement control measures.