

fall 2009

news lines

wherestheline.ca

Current news and views from
Alberta's Joint Utility Safety Team

WHERE'S THE LINE?

The farmer was preoccupied as he loaded the air seeder onto a trailer to move it a few miles down the highway. He was aware of the height of the equipment when measured from the ground but he didn't account for the added height of the trailer. Once loaded, the combined height of the trailer and the air seeder reached over 5.7 metres high. As he pulled out onto the main highway, the equipment touched a roadside power line...



THE SHOCKING TRUTH

Every day, three people in Alberta come into contact with an overhead or underground power line, risking serious injury or death because they didn't ask themselves, "Where's the line?"

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY SEES RISE IN NUMBER OF POWER LINE INCIDENTS

On-the-job safety is a priority and concern among employers in most industries in Alberta. In 2007, the Workers Compensation Board of Alberta paid out nearly \$220 million in compensation for a broad range of work-related incidents.

Power line safety is a going concern in the agricultural, forestry, oil and gas, electric, and construction industries. Incidents involving above- and below-ground power lines are devastating to victims and their loved ones and costly in lost productivity.

In recent years, the agricultural industry has seen a rise in the number of power line incidents. Tractors, front-end loaders, grain augers, wing-type cultivators, air seeders, sprayers and equipment

with antennas or booms have higher incident rates and are considered high-risk.

Spring Seeding

Most agricultural power line incidents occur during spring seeding between April and early June and winter wheat seeding in September. During these stressful months, spraying and harvesting are particularly dangerous activities and demand extra caution.

Winter Months

Severe weather such as ice storms, hoarfrost, extreme cold and heavy winds can cause power lines to break. If ice builds up on a power line, it can be heavy enough to cause cross arms and poles to come down and conductors to break.

Danger Signs

- **Snow on the ground presents a danger:** A *downed power line* may remain energized. Keep yourself and all livestock at least 10 metres away and immediately contact your local utility company.
- **Low-hanging power lines:** Snow and ice storms can cause power lines to sag lower, reducing the height between your equipment and the power line.
- **Packed snow:** Be aware when driving on packed snow. It can reduce the distance between your equipment and overhead power lines.
- **Clearing snow with your equipment:** Know the height AND width of your equipment, making sure not to hit a power line pole or an underground transformer.

RAISING THE BAR ON SAFETY: HEIGHT REGULATIONS FROM ALBERTA INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation issues regulations that apply to all industries, including agriculture.

If your equipment is over 4.15 metres, it's considered over-height and you **must have a permit** for transport from Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. If your equipment is over 5.3 metres you **must also contact** your local utility in advance of your move.

Key Reminders When Transporting on Public Roads

- **Plan ahead:** Notify your local utility company in advance of transporting, as it may need to shut power off in preparation. Also take weather conditions and heavy traffic into consideration when planning.
- **Know the height of your equipment:** Newer equipment models can reach as high as 5.9 metres. Know the height of each piece of equipment before moving it, as equipment is taller if placed on a trailer. Check that all augers, dump truck beds and other equipment are in the lowered position before transportation.

- **Know your route:** Power lines can hang as low as four metres from the ground. Keep this in mind as clearance heights are reduced when off major highways.

Key Reminders When Working in the Fields

- **Raising and lowering wings, booms or extensions:** Be aware of nearby power lines. Extensions on equipment can reach as high as 7.9 metres. Also consider antennas that may be on top of equipment.

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RAISING THE BAR ON SAFETY continued

- Moving equipment on your property:**
 Call your utility company before transporting any major equipment, even when moving from field to field on your farm or ranch. The utility company will map out the various heights of each power line so that you can identify the potential trouble spots and plan ahead.
- Hazards when erecting fence wire:**
 Don't install the wire along the same route as power lines and don't strain it where it could spring and make contact with power lines.
- Ladders, poles and antennas:**
 Keep all items away from power lines leading to the house or other buildings on the property.
- Hay and grain piles, buildings and silos:**
 Keep these seven metres away from power lines.

Stay "7 Metres Safe"

It can be the distance between life and death

You and your equipment must stay a minimum of seven metres away from overhead lines. When working closer, call the utility company. Always call **Alberta One Call** (1.800.242.3447) before you dig so you don't hit underground power lines.

Keeping Jobsites Safe: *It's the right thing to do*

Farmers/Ranchers

Protect yourself, your family, friends and employees.

Farm/Ranch Hands

Protect yourself. If you feel the jobsite is unsafe, you don't have to continue working.

3 RULES TO A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Before you start any job, always remember:

1. Stay at least seven metres away from power lines.
2. Know the height of your equipment.
3. Make a work plan to include the location of overhead and underground power lines.



JUST's MANDATE

In 2006, Alberta's electric utilities and the Alberta Government formed the Joint Utility Safety Team (JUST) to collectively help address the common safety issue of contact with power lines.

JUST's mandate is to positively affect change in attitudes and behaviours toward power line safety, to help reduce power line incidents. Through ongoing safety awareness and industry education, JUST is committed to helping breed a long-term "culture of power line safety" in Alberta. This involves everyone working around overhead or underground power lines, including electric utilities, oil and gas, construction, forestry and agricultural industries.

For more information, contact Mona Bartsoff, JUST Chair at 403-514-4596 or at mona.bartsoff@fortisalberta.com

Learn more about staying safe at wherestheline.ca

WHERE'S THE LINE?

POWER LINE SAFETY

The members of the Joint Utility Safety Team:

ALTALINK

ATCO Electric

ENMAX

EPCOR

FORTIS ALBERTA

Government of Alberta