

# WHERE'S THE LINE?

POWER LINE SAFETY

April 2010

## **Every day, three Albertans risk their lives needlessly by contacting a power line... because they didn't ask themselves "WHERE'S THE LINE?"**

Power line risks are 24/7/365. Yet the sad reality is that every day, three Albertans risk their lives needlessly around overhead or underground power lines. Workplace safety training often focuses on the safety concerns specific to each industry while excluding the other hazards that may exist on the site such as power lines.

What makes power lines that much more hazardous is that often, you don't have to actually touch a power line to be injured or killed. Also, the lines tend to be "invisible". Overhead lines can be difficult to see and underground lines need to be located and marked before digging. In addition, the height of construction, agriculture, oilfield and other commercial equipment is increasing while the height of power lines has remained the same. All things combined, the hazards are high and the consequences can be deadly, affecting victims and their families forever.

## **Complacency and a false sense of invincibility are a deadly combination.**

Operators, typically males between the ages of 18 and 50, are at high risk for power line incidents despite generally knowing how to protect themselves. Deadlines and productivity pressures often lead to skipping safety steps. The problem is further exacerbated by an attitude of complacency born of routine tasks and procedures and a false sense of invincibility. The fact is, regardless of how experienced an Operator is, no one is invincible to the hazards of power lines. Operators need constant reminding that looking out for their own safety should be their top priority.

In 2006, Alberta's electric utilities and the Government of Alberta came together as the Joint Utility Safety Team (JUST). They all share a common concern over Alberta's high volume of power line contacts. By pooling resources and working collectively, they are maximizing their efforts and achieving more impact than if each organization worked independently to educate the public. JUST's partners are AltaLink, ATCO Electric, ENMAX, EPCOR, FortisAlberta and the Government of Alberta.

"JUST is committed to positively affect change in attitudes and behaviours toward power line safety," states Mona Bartsoff, JUST Chair, "with the long-term goal of helping the utilities industry breed a 'culture of power line safety' in Alberta."

The main JUST initiative is to drive home the "WHERE'S THE LINE?" advertising campaign. "WHERE'S THE LINE?" serves as a reminder to Operators to always ask oneself the question and to know the answer before starting any work. The campaign consists of a series of ads and high-profile promotional tools distributed to targeted industries. "Results to date have been very encouraging" Bartsoff adds "but we need to continue to be vigilant about raising awareness of how these deadly incidents can be prevented." As of fall 2009, awareness among Operators of the "7 Metres Safe" message reached 31%, a 22% increase over the 9% awareness in fall 2008.

In January 2010, "WHERE'S THE LINE?" launched an attention-grabbing 1950's-style "monster" TV commercial to show how quickly power lines can become deadly – *no matter how invincible one thinks they are.*

The members of the Joint Utility Safety Team:

**ALTALINK**

**ATCO Electric**

**ENMAX**

**EPCOR**

**FORTIS  
ALBERTA**

**Government  
of Alberta**

## **Alberta's first Power Line Safety Day**

To further highlight the importance of being vigilant about power line safety around the clock, JUST has declared Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> as Alberta's first Power Line Safety Day, tying into the 2010 North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week. This day will be marked by a number of initiatives including a JUST media event with a power line safety demonstration and distribution of "WHERE'S THE LINE?" promotional kits to JUST partners' customers across the province on that day. In addition, each JUST partner will be hosting their own corporate programs in support of power line safety throughout NAOSH Week.

For Joint Utility Safety Team media inquiries, contact:

Mona Bartsoff  
Chair, Joint Utility Safety Team  
(403) 514-4596  
[www.wherestheline.com](http://www.wherestheline.com)

The members of the Joint Utility Safety Team:

**ALTALINK**

**ATCO Electric**

**ENMAX**

**EPCOR**

**FORTIS  
ALBERTA**

**Government  
of Alberta** ■