

April 2010

## The Story Behind the Joint Utility Safety Team

- Between 2000 – 2005, there was growing concern among the electric utility industry and government about the power line safety issues in Alberta.
- There was a high volume of incidents recorded by each utility in the following sectors: transportation, construction, farming, oil and gas, forestry and telecommunications. Incidents ranged in severity from death to long-term disability, affecting victims and their families.
- In 2006, Alberta's many electric utilities and the Alberta Government formed the Joint Utility Safety Team (JUST) to collectively address the common safety issue of contact with power lines and explore social marketing efforts to help reduce power line incidents.
- In 2007, JUST evolved to include six active partners: AltaLink, ATCO Electric, ENMAX, EPCOR, FortisAlberta and the Government of Alberta.
- All of the partners committed to pooling their resources to help the electric utility industry breed a "culture of power line safety" in Alberta over the long term.

### MANDATE

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 and underground power lines, including electric utilities, oil and gas, construction, forestry and agricultural industries.

### EVERY DAY, THREE ALBERTANS RISK THEIR LIVES NEEDLESSLY BY COMING INTO CONTACT WITH A POWER LINE

Factors that make power lines uniquely hazardous:

- A worker's first instinct in dealing with a power line contact could be harmful. They often panic, get hurt trying to exit their equipment, or become victims themselves when rushing to the aid of others.
- One doesn't have to actually touch a power line to be injured or killed.
- Underground lines need to be located by Alberta One Call before digging. Overhead lines can be difficult to see. When transporting tall loads, application must be made to Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation to move the load and high-load procedures must be followed.
- Workers and Operators are focused on moving parts and equipment, not stationary objects like power lines.

### JUST POWER LINE SAFETY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Power line safety and power line risks are 24/7/365.

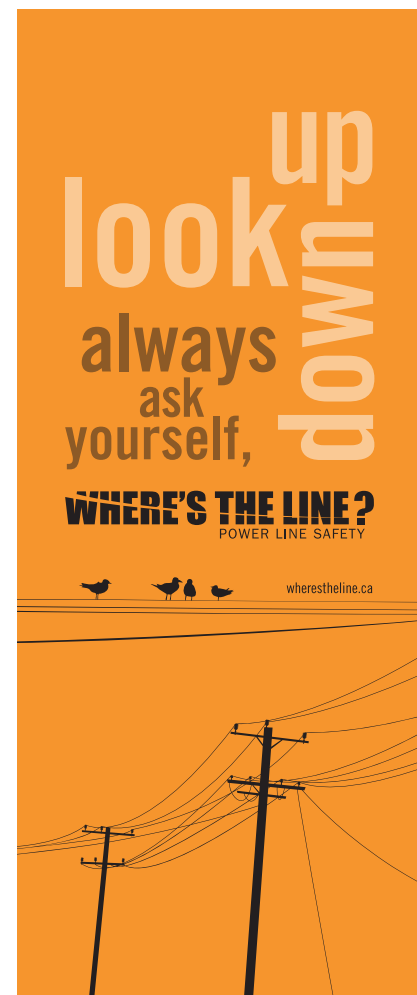
Operators, typically males between the ages of 18 to 50, are at high risk for power line incidents despite generally knowing how to protect themselves. Deadlines and productivity pressures often lead to skipping safety steps. The problem is further exacerbated by an attitude of complacency born of routine tasks and procedures, and a false sense of invincibility.

Safety training typically focuses on the top safety issues for a particular industry. Power line safety is usually low on the list and may, at best, be offered once a year. As such, power line safety is often not top-of-mind for safety leaders or their infield crew.

Ongoing communications that "interrupt and remind" workers and Operators "in the moment," while they're in the field, is critical to influence attitudes and behaviours about power line safety.

### OBJECTIVES

- Change attitudes and behaviours related to power line safety.
- Positively influence the power line incident rate across Alberta.
- Create champions among influential stakeholders and secure strategic partners to help JUST achieve its mandate.



## Initiatives

- 2007** • JUST launched its “WHERE’S THE LINE?” brand and sustained advertising campaign for all its power line safety initiatives. “WHERE’S THE LINE?” is meant to be a reminder to always ask oneself this very important question, and to know the answer before starting any work. Its bottom-line implication for workers and Operators: “It’s your right and obligation to be safe around power lines.”
- 2008** • A variety of high-profile promotional tools featuring “WHERE’S THE LINE?” were added to the campaign and distributed to the priority industries. These were designed to be constant safety reminders while on the job, (i.e. cab stickers, bumper stickers, etc.)
- 2009** • The sustained “WHERE’S THE LINE?” advertising campaign focused on driving home the “7 Metres Safe” message (i.e. the minimum safe distance between one’s equipment and power lines) and the dangers of complacency on the jobsite.
  - JUST’s advertising campaign (radio and TV) was expanded to include strategically located outdoor billboards. Communications efforts aimed at engaging targeted stakeholders in a dialogue included the introduction of an industry newsletter, as well as expanding its website to include educational materials.
- 2010** • In January 2010, “WHERE’S THE LINE?” launched an attention-grabbing 1950’s-style “monster” TV commercial to reinforce the “7 Metres Safe” message and to show how quickly power lines can become deadly – *no matter how invincible one thinks they are.*
  - “WHERE’S THE LINE?” advertising to date has primarily targeted the oil and gas, construction and agricultural sectors. As the campaign evolves, it will continue to expand its message to target other key sectors.
  - To further highlight the importance of being vigilant 24/7/365 about power line safety, JUST has declared Monday, May 3rd as Alberta’s first Power Line Safety Day, tying into the 2010 North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week. It’s anticipated that Alberta’s Power Line Safety Day will be an annual event.

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Research is conducted each year against JUST’s original 2007 Benchmark research to measure various stakeholders’ attitudes and risk behaviours in relation to power line safety. The findings are incorporated into JUST’s communications.

## KEY FINDINGS – 2009

- Research conducted in late 2009 found that within the relevant Operator target group, 59% recall of “WHERE’S THE LINE?” was achieved in the initial six months of the 2009 campaign.
- 31% of Operators, as of fall 2009, know the safe distance for work around power lines versus 9% in spring 2008. This was achieved within six months of introducing the “7 Metres Safe” message.
- 61% of Operators who heard the radio advertising thought about the ads’ message while on the jobsite or en route to it.
- Operators in the agriculture sector considered power line risks their primary concern (57% vs. 29% of counterparts in other industries) yet they were by far the least likely (15%) to have taken power line safety training compared to their counterparts (44%). They were also the most interested (72% vs. 57% among their counterparts) in learning about safe power line working distances.

For highlights of JUST’s 2007 Benchmark research please refer to its 2009 Media Backgrounder at [www.wherestheline.ca](http://www.wherestheline.ca).

### FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Learn more about staying safe at [www.wherestheline.ca](http://www.wherestheline.ca)

**WHERE’S THE LINE?**  
POWER LINE SAFETY