

TOOLBOX TALK #24

BE CAREFUL AROUND POWER LINES

Look up and live! Power lines can be serious and potentially fatal hazards when proper safety precautions are not followed.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) recommends locating all overhead powerlines before beginning work, and then ensuring workers and equipment are at least 10 feet away from them at all times. Workers should never touch anything that is in contact with a power line, and need to be particularly careful of any fencing near the lines. Additionally, workers should be instructed to carry ladders and other pieces of equipment horizontally, lower all equipment apparatus before driving, and never spray water near power lines.



Downed power lines

All downed power lines should be viewed as dangerous. ESFI recommends workers follow these steps if they encounter a downed power line:

- Move away from the line and anything touching it. The ground around it may be energized, even as far as 35 feet away.
- Assume all downed power lines are live – it's impossible to tell whether a line is energized by looking at it.
- Shuffle away with small steps with your feet together on the ground at all times if you are near a downed line.
- Do not touch a person who is in contact with a downed line. You may end up being the next victim. Call 911 for help.
- Never try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with one. "Even nonconductive materials like wood or cloth can conduct electricity if even slightly wet," ESFI warns.
- Do not step in water near a downed line.
- Do not drive over a downed line. However, if your vehicle comes in contact with a downed line, stay inside it. Honk for help, but let others know they should not approach the vehicle. If you must leave because of a fire, jump out with both feet together and shuffle away. Avoid contacting both your vehicle and the ground at the same time.