

Farming Safely Near Electrical Lines

Modern farms take full advantage of electrical energy in the daily routine and special farming operations. Like any form of energy, electricity can hurt or kill if it is not used safely and with due care. Farm safety statistics indicate that electricity is not a major cause of farm accidents, but its misuse and accidental electrical contacts have, over the years, taken the lives or seriously injured a number of farmers, farm family members and farm workers.

ELECTRICAL FACTS AND PRINCIPLES FOR SAFE FARMING NEAR POWER LINES

- Most overhead power lines have no protective insulation. Any physical or equipment contact with them could be dangerous.
- Non-metallic materials, such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes, straw and hay, can conduct electricity, depending on moisture content and surface contamination.
- When people or any objects touch or come too close to a power line, there is an instant flow of electricity through them to ground.
- The flow of electricity through the human body can burn, severely injure or cause death. Less than one ampere of electricity can kill.
- The flow of electricity into the ground around

equipment or around a person in accidental contact with a power line, or surrounding a fallen power line itself, can be dangerous to bystanders. The electricity can flow through the ground and electrocute those who come close.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES...

Farmers, family members and farm workers have been seriously injured or killed while performing the following outside activities:

- Moving farm machinery, hoppers, bins, sprayer booms, cultivator wings, grain augers, bale elevators, scaffolds and portable building into power lines
- Touching power lines with tools
- Clearing storm-damaged trees, limbs or other debris that are touching power lines or are close to fallen power lines
- Cutting down trees or pruning limbs that fall into power lines
- Trying to move or relocate fallen electric wires
- Lifting power lines by hand or with lumber or farm tools when moving high loads or buildings
- Raising or carrying ladders, poles, rods, irrigation pipes or eaves troughing into power lines
- Raising dump truck boxes, front end loaders, well digging equipment or farm equipment into power lines

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- Touching or standing close to equipment or its load that is in contact with power lines.
- Digging into underground power lines
- Attempting to rescue a person in contact with live wires or equipment that is touching power lines.

PREVENT ELECTRICAL CONTACT ACCIDENTS

Take a good look around your farm. Note the location of all overhead power lines. Review your farm activities and work practices near these lines. Remember, if you come in contact with a power line, a serious injury could occur. Even allowing equipment to come too close to power lines is dangerous, as it may result in a flashover with the same effects as direct contact. If equipment or objects must be moved in the vicinity of overhead power lines, use extreme care. Watch the wires carefully and get someone to guide you if possible. Move equipment slowly and carefully, maintaining a safe distance of at least 10 feet from the power line.