

## **Power Line Hazards – Safety Talk**

When it comes to electrical safety, there is NO crossing the line. Contact with overhead and underground power lines is a major cause of fatal accidents in construction. The equipment involved is often a backhoe, dump truck, boom truck, crane, or excavator. Scaffolds, extension ladders, rods driven into the ground, lengths of pipe, and metal siding have also been involved.

### **Plan before you start**

- Look for aerial lines in the vicinity. Call the utility for a location for underground power lines as these cannot be seen. Contact Newfoundland Power or Newfoundland & Labrador Hydro (Hydro) with inquiries about working safely around power lines and electrical equipment.
- Show others the location of power lines and warn of the dangers.
- Keep your distance – at least **5.5** meters. Ask the utilities about power line voltages and safe clearances for equipment such as booms, cranes, snow clearing equipment, dump trucks, tractor trailers and other equipment such as ladders and scaffolding.

### **Know your limits**

- Specific requirements for maintaining clearances and providing worker training are mandated under the province’s Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Regulations.
- Special permits are required from the utility when your work requires you or your equipment to go closer than 6 meters to a power line.
- The OH&S Regulations also require operators of equipment having the capability of contacting overhead or underground power lines to have successfully completed an approved “Power Line Hazards” safety course.

### **A safety space must be kept between yourself and power lines**

- Electricity is always seeking a path to ground (earth).
- Electricity will flow along power lines without causing harm unless it is interrupted. I.e. provided with a path to ground.
- Keep a safe distance between you and power lines at all times.(5.5 meters).
- REMEMBER: If interrupted, electricity will follow all available paths to ground – including you – causing severe injury or even death.

## **High-voltage power lines are not insulated – touch them and you could be injured or killed**

- Overhead power lines are not insulated with a protective outer covering. If you touch them, or even come close enough to them, with a ladder, boom truck, crane, or any other piece of equipment, this could cause the electricity to be directed to the ground through the equipment and YOU, causing serious injury or death.
- Workers must inspect each work site, before starting the job, to check for overhead and underground lines. The utility will assist in locating underground power lines. If **5.5** metres cannot be maintained between the equipment and overhead power lines, call Newfoundland Power or Hydro for assistance.
- After the job is complete, extreme caution should be taken when dismantling scaffolds and lowering cranes. Often this is the most dangerous part of the job since workers on site may have become accustomed to their surroundings and less aware of the hazards.
- When operating equipment, post a signal person to ensure you maintain a safe working distance from overhead power lines. If there is not a minimum of **5.5** metres clearance, OH&S Regulations require you contact Newfoundland Power or Hydro to obtain an Energized Power Line Clearance Permit.

## **If you or your equipment comes too close to an energized power line, you and your co-workers are at high risk of being seriously injured or killed**

- If a crane or truck makes contact with power lines, remain in, or on the equipment and warn others to stay away. Try to lower or move the equipment away from the power lines. The safest option is to stay in, or on the equipment until Newfoundland Power or Hydro advises you it is safe to leave. Others should stay at least **30** metres away from the equipment.

## **When transporting high loads, never attempt to raise power lines**

- If you intend to transport any load in excess of 4.15 metres high along a public road, you are required to obtain a permit from the Department of Transportation & Works.
- Newfoundland Power and Hydro must also be contacted to determine whether or not a utility escort is required. When operating equipment, post a signal person to ensure you maintain the specified safe working distance from overhead power lines.

## **Underground power lines are as dangerous as overhead power lines**

- **BEFORE** you dig, check with Newfoundland Power or Hydro to find out the exact location of underground power lines.
- Operators of large excavation equipment must always be aware of underground and overhead power lines.

## **In an emergency**

- If there is a life-threatening situation or risk of fire, call your local emergency provider immediately.
- If there is no immediate risk, call Newfoundland Power or Hydro for advice or to attend the scene.
- If your equipment has made contact with a power line while you are in or on it, remain in or on the equipment, and warn others to stay away. Try to lower or move the equipment away from the power lines. If you must leave the vehicle because of risk of fire, jump well clear of the vehicle with your feet together and shuffle away keeping both feet close together. Never be in contact with the ground and your vehicle or equipment at the same time.
- If someone else has received an electrical shock, do not touch the person if he or she is still in contact with the source of electricity. The electricity will travel from their body into yours.
- If you see a downed power line, stay back 30 metres and contact Newfoundland Power or Hydro immediately. Stay in the area and warn others to stay clear until help arrives.

## **Emergency Contact Information:**

### **Newfoundland Power**

Prior to working near overhead power line or before digging or excavating: **1-800-663-2802**

In case of a public contact/emergency call immediately: **1-800-474-5711 or 709-737-5711**

### **Newfoundland & Labrador Hydro**

Customer Service: **1-888-737-1296**

