

SAFETY ALERT

Working near powerlines.

Recent near hits:

Significant near hits have recently been reported while working near overhead powerlines. These near hits have been reported by PF Olsen staff and contractors, both in Australia and New Zealand.

Although these incidents were near hits, any of them could have resulted in injuries or fatalities. In addition, a recent fatality was reported by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland: "The operator of a tractor with a boom spray that had made contact with a high voltage powerline was killed. It appears that the contract worker had exited the tractor and made contact with the arm of the boom spray and the ground at the time of the incident."

The facts:

Electricity is a significant hazard source which is often underestimated, largely because of its nature. We can see the powerline but we cannot see the hazard that has the potential to kill you. Often we do not understand what may cause it to jump or earth out through what you may intentionally or unintentionally do while working near a powerline.

Overhead powerlines have well documented exclusion zones that set the minimum not the maximum clearance distances. The exclusion zones are not the same for all powerlines and vary dependant on the size and type of the powerline (refer to the diagrams below).

All known powerlines and other services are shown on PF Olsen property maps. Prior to commencing operations on any property, the map should be checked to ensure that the intended operations will not impact on the powerlines or other services. If the property map is not accurate it is your responsibility to ensure that it is updated as soon as practicable.

The issues associated with working near powerlines need to be carefully assessed and managed. This assessment should be undertaken in consultation with the contractor undertaking the work, the direct supervisor and the area manager.

Forward planning and understanding the issues is the key to working near powerlines. A longer than expected lead time may be required, particularly if there is a requirement to work with external authorities to switch a line off.

NO GO ZONE for Power Poles

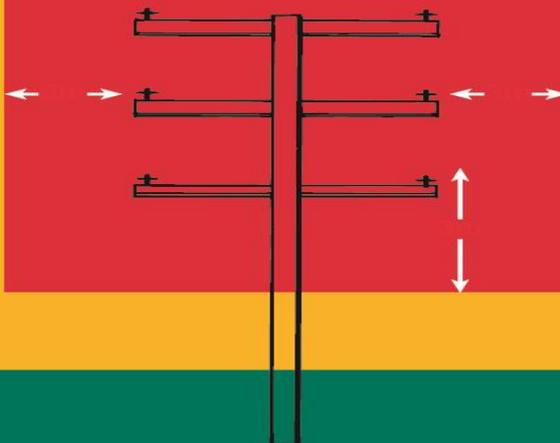
Anywhere above
Power Line
and
Within 3m each side
or below
See Special Provisions

Spotter
Required
Between
3-6.4m
of
Power
Lines

Spotter
Required
Between
3-6.4m
of
Power
Lines

Open
Area
Outside
6.4m
of
Power
Lines

Open
Area
Outside
6.4m
of
Power
Lines



NO GO ZONE for Towers

Anywhere above
Power Line
and
Within 8m each side
or below
See Special Provisions

Spotter
Required
Between
8-10m
of
Power
Lines

Spotter
Required
Between
8-10m
of
Power
Lines

Open
Area
Outside
10m
of
Power
Lines

Open
Area
Outside
10m
of
Power
Lines



High risk activity - Machinery movement around and underneath powerlines:

The powerline support structure is quite obvious but the lines between these structures are more difficult to see and are quite easily forgotten. The lines between these structures can be moved by the wind and hence change the line of the exclusion zones. The lines also sag, particularly in warmer weather, again changing the exclusion zones. Particular allowances need to be made where machinery will be moving through under the powerlines. Consideration needs to be given for the type of machinery in use. Tracked type equipment are considered to be a dead earth and more likely to directly conduct power. This does not mean that rubber tyre equipment is much safer, they will also conduct power.

High risk activity - Manual or mechanical tree falling near powerlines.

Manual tree falling to clear trees near powerlines is to be avoided and mechanical tree falling or removal is considered to be the best option. Only advanced tree fallers with a spotter are to undertake manual tree falling activities near powerlines.

Mechanical tree falling near powerlines should be undertaken by machines fitted with fixed felling heads not floppy felling heads. A trained spotter is to be present during felling operations within one and a half tree lengths of all powerlines.



Powerline suppression:

In a high risk environment, line suppression may be required. Powerline suppression must be arranged in consultation with the local power authority. As a word of warning: this will not happen overnight. Generally a lot of forward planning is required.

The role you play:

You must...

Ensure that you identify and assess the hazards associated with working near powerlines, and implement suitable control measures.

Signpost powerlines prior to commencing operations if operations are near powerlines (refer to the above picture).

Consult with those undertaking the task, supervisors and the area manager.

Report any discrepancies with the PF Olsen maps.

Report any incidents or near hits associated with powerlines.

For further information on this issue please contact your PF Olsen supervisor.