

For immediate release

Contacts with power lines on the rise ATCO Electric gravely concerned about personal safety

EDMONTON, AB – ATCO Electric is urging contractors and farmers to ensure their personal safety and that of their equipment by making sure they don't hit overhead power lines.

“We are deeply committed to the safety of the customers we serve. Seeing a 30% increase in the number of power line contacts this year over last year causes us great concern,” says Dave Jones, ATCO Electric Vice President, Distribution. “Contractors – people driving large machinery like dump trucks or bob cats – are the group that is showing the highest increase in the number of overhead line contacts.”

To date this year, public contacts with overhead power lines have increased 30% from 337 incidents at this time last year, to 425 incidents. Contacting high voltage lines can send lethal currents through your body resulting in injury, severe burns, or even death.

Jones attributes the increase in public incidents of contacting power line contacts to Alberta's robust economy, the amount of work and machinery in operation in the province, and the influx of new workers coming to our area.

“We understand that people are working very hard to get the job done but overlooking or forgetting about safety precautions can cost someone their life,” says Jones.

“The first thing we tell people is, if you’re working with machinery, take a look around you. It’s no different then doing a safety walk around a vehicle – you just need to look up to see what’s overhead. It takes mere seconds to do that, ironically the same amount of time it could take to kill you if you hit the line. Don’t work, play or move machinery near over head power lines until you look up to see what’s above you. Plan not to hit the line and save yourself from injury or worse.”

ATCO Electric is focusing on overhead power line safety in its fall print and radio campaign and offers power line safety information on its website. The company also offers safety presentations in the communities it serves and has Overhead Power line Contact Awareness video on its website at www.atcoelectric.com.

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Electrical Safety

Learn them and pass them on!

1. 10 Metres To Safety

Stay back at least 10 metres or 33 feet from any downed power line, exposed underground cable, or where there is contact with an overhead power line. Depending on voltage, this distance may increase up to 32 metres or 105 feet.

2. Look Up And Live

Workers who operate machinery or equipment that could come in contact with power lines need to look up and check for overhead power lines before beginning work.

3. Know Your Limits

When operating machinery or equipment in close proximity to power lines, always maintain the limits of approach: from three to seven metres or 10-23 feet depending on the voltage. For proper safe working distances contact Alberta Workplace Health and Safety at 1-866-415-8690. In keeping with the Alberta OH&S Code, if equipment COULD come closer than the minimum distances, you must contact ATCO Electric before beginning work.

4. Don't Hang Around Operating Equipment

Stay at least 10 metres or 33 feet away from equipment operating near power lines because if it contacts an energized line, the electricity will go to the ground. The operator should be on the vehicle with everyone else clear of the vehicle when a boom is in motion. If you must approach, ensure the equipment is not operating.

5. Shuffle Or Hop, Don't Step

If the machinery you are operating contacts an energized line, move it away from the line to break contact. If this can't be done, remain on the machine. If there is an uncontrollable fire, jump off the machine keeping your feet together. Never contact the machine and the ground at the same time. Once clear of the machine, shuffle away, never allowing the heel of one foot to move beyond the toe of the other, or, hop with both feet together to a minimum distance of 10 metres or 33 feet.

6. **Call Before You Dig**

The Alberta OH&S Code states that whenever digging or drilling is to occur, you must determine the location of all underground services. Call Alberta One Call before you dig at 1-800-242-3447. If a cable is accidentally dug up, call ATCO Electric immediately at 1-800-668-5506. Move the digger bucket clear of the cable and stay out of the trench. If the machine can't be moved, keep workers 10 metres or 33 feet away and have the operator remain on the vehicle. In the case of fire, follow the "Shuffle or Hop, Don't Step" rule.

7. **Don't Become A Victim**

Always call your local emergency services when someone is injured in an electrical accident. If they are still in contact with the electrical source and you touch them, you could be seriously injured or killed. Keep everyone back, a minimum distance of 10 metres or 33 feet and have someone call for help immediately.