

Reminders to Cultivate Safety Every Day

BY BRUCE GRAHAM



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From time to time, it's important to remind ourselves of some basic safety lessons. For most of us, buckling up is probably second nature. We know better than to text and

drive. Hazardous materials should be stored out of reach of children and basic first aid skills are great to learn. I hope safety awareness around electricity is also automatic: water and electricity don't mix, ladders and power lines should not get acquainted, and call 811 to dig safe.

This time of year, it is also important to remember safety during our outdoor activities. On the farm, harvest means long hours and little rest which can make it difficult to stay alert and on the lookout for potential hazards. Equipment improvements, such as GPS auto-guidance, have increased productivity and quality, but they have also added a safety concern when working near power lines. Safety should not be put on auto-pilot.

Most agricultural equipment is not a problem for overhead lines when stowed for road travel or in operation for field work. The problems occur when equipment is prepared for operation as it enters the field and in the process of unloading the harvested product. These operations typically occur at the edge of the field and, oftentimes, under the overhead power line. The good news is with the following safety steps, risk can be greatly reduced:

- ▶ Keep a 20-foot minimum distance around power lines—above, below, and to the side.
- ▶ Use a spotter when moving

machinery around the farm. It can be difficult to judge how close a piece of machinery is to an electrical hazard from the driver's seat.

- ▶ Use caution when handling long items such as irrigation pipe, ladders and rods. Coming too close to a power line can cause electricity to arc, or "jump," to conducting material or objects.
- ▶ Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors are now equipped with radios and communications systems that have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines.
- ▶ Avoid raising the arms of planters, cultivators and truck beds near power lines.
- ▶ Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- ▶ Remember, even non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

Overhead electric wires are not

the only source of electrical contact that can result in a serious incident. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when a guy wire is broken it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires anything but harmless. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Do not try to fix it yourself.

If you are in equipment or a vehicle that has come into contact with power lines, stay in place and call 911 to have the utility notified. Warn others to stay away and wait for the utility crew to cut the power. The only reason to exit is if the equipment starts on fire, which is very rare. If this is the case though, jump away with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop at least 40 feet away to safety.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org—and let's cultivate safety every day. **KCL**

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ALERT TODAY,
ALIVE
TOMORROW

HEADS UP FOR
FARM SAFETY

Stay safe around downed power lines. Consider all lines, equipment and conductors to be live and dangerous. If the vehicle is on fire, or you must exit for other safety reasons, follow these steps:

1. Jump clear of the vehicle. Do not let any part of your body or clothes touch the ground and the machinery at the same time.
2. Land with feet together and hop away in small steps to minimize the path of electric current and avoid electric shock.
3. Keep going until you are at least 40 ft. away.
4. Call for help. Make sure no one gets within 40 ft. of the downed line.
5. Do not re-enter the area or vehicle until emergency responders and your electric co-op crews determine it is safe.