



Toolbox Talks

Overhead Power Lines



Overhead power lines at the job site are hazardous because they carry extremely high voltage. Fatal electrocution is the main risk but burns and falls from elevations are also hazards. Using tools and equipment that can contact the power lines increases the risk.

Examples of equipment that can contact power lines:

- Aluminum Paint Rollers
- Backhoes
- Concrete Pumpers
- Cranes
- Forklifts
- Long-Handled Cement Finishing Floats
- Metal Building Materials
- Metal Ladders
- Raised Dump Truck Beds
- Scaffolds

The general rule is to stay at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines which pertains to personnel, equipment, scaffolding and ladders. However, for higher voltages, the power line clearance requirements increase.

➤ It's important to review the OSHA standards for the work activities and equipment being used to ensure that minimum distances are maintained for the safety of all workers including equipment operators and ground crew.

OSHA Standard 1926.1407-1411 provides the requirements for power line safety when working with cranes and derricks in construction and 1926.451(f)(6) provides the requirements for scaffolding safety near power lines.

- Assume all power lines are energized unless the owner of the line or electric utility company indicates otherwise.
- Conduct a jobsite survey to identify potential hazards and develop and implement appropriate control measures for these hazards.
- Always survey the site for overhead power lines. Look up!
- Never use cranes or equipment alone where it is difficult to maintain the minimum required distance from overhead power lines. A trained observer can assist to help the operator maintain a safe clearance.
- Increase job site hazard awareness by posting signs reminding crews and equipment operators of the overhead power line dangers.
- Use non-conductive wood or fiberglass ladders when working near power lines.

