



Worker electrocuted on a farm in North West Victoria November 2020

Safety alert

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is issuing this alert to highlight the risk of using mobile plant and equipment on farms near overhead powerlines.

What happened

On 12 November 2020, a farm worker was using a telehandler (JCB tractor) to move hay bales when the telescopic boom made contact with an overhead 22,000 volt powerline. It is believed that after contacting the overhead powerline, the farm worker got out of the telehandler, and received a fatal electric shock.

Photo 1: The incident site



Electrical safety risk

Overhead powerlines are located across many farms in Victoria. They pose a safety risk to people working with equipment or machinery nearby that can reach and contact the overhead powerlines.

Since 2010, four workers have died on Victorian farms after equipment or machinery they were operating made contact with overhead powerlines.

Recommended ways to control risks

Understand the capabilities and limitations of your equipment and machinery when working near powerlines.

- Plan work so that equipment or machinery cannot physically come closer than 6.4 metres to powerlines when:
 - loading and unloading
 - lifting
 - tipping, and
 - excavating.
- Identify the maximum height of your equipment or machinery in travel and all working modes.
NEVER set up or operate extendable equipment or machinery under powerlines.
- Stow away booms, any extendable equipment or machinery, and lower tipper trays before moving or traversing across the land.

Emergency response to a powerline incident

If you accidentally make contact with a powerline, follow the steps below.

If safe to do so:

- Stay inside the equipment or machinery – do not exit while the equipment or machinery is in contact with the overhead powerline.
- Instruct anyone nearby to stay at least 10 metres clear from the incident area.
- If possible, try to operate the machinery to break contact with the powerline.
- If you have a phone on you:
 - Call 000 if anyone is injured or if there is an immediate risk
 - Call the power company who owns the powerlines at your location
 - Wait for instruction from the representative of the local power company.

If it is not safe (e.g. in case of fire):

- Jump clear from the vehicle, keeping legs and feet close together and landing both feet on the ground at the same time.
NEVER touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.
- Then keeping both feet together and touching each other, shuffle your feet until you are a distance of more than 10m away from the equipment or machinery.
- Once clear, do not return to the machinery or approach any closer than 10 metres to the powerline.
Always assume that any powerline is live.

More information

- Brochure: [Electrical safety on farms](#)
- Campaign: [Look up and live](#)

Who we are

We are Victoria's safety regulator for electricity, gas and pipelines.

Our role is to ensure that Victorian gas and electricity industries are safe and meet community expectations. We are also responsible for licensing and registering electricians, and educating the community about energy safety.

More information is available on the Energy Safe Victoria website: www.esv.vic.gov.au