

# Electric shock from street sign

Issued by ESV February 2021

## Safety alert

### **BEWARE OF UNDERGROUND POWER CABLES**

#### **TAKE EXTRA CARE WHEN 'DRIVING' METAL POLES AND OTHER OBJECTS INTO THE GROUND**

Following a potentially serious electric shock, Energy Safe Victoria is issuing an alert about the risk to workers and the general public of driving street signs and other objects into the ground in road reserves and footpaths.

#### **What happened**

On Saturday 6 February 2021 a person installing concrete footpath received a potentially serious electric shock when they contacted a street sign. The sign, which had been installed recently, had damaged underground low voltage cables and was energised at 240V. The person was advised to seek a precautionary medical check.



**Photo 1: The energised street sign**



**Photo 2: The damaged cable**

#### **Electrical safety risks**

Underground electrical cables are installed in roads, footpaths and road reserves in most residential areas in Melbourne and all Victorian towns. Any underground work in these areas has the potential to damage cables. When cables are damaged by metal objects including street signs, fencing stakes, or any digging tool, there is a risk of electric shock that can cause serious injury and death.

## Control the risks

- Before carrying out any penetration or excavation work, or installing equipment into the ground, **always** check for underground electrical cables and other assets by contacting Dial Before You Dig ([www.1100.com.au](http://www.1100.com.au)).
  - It is a person's legal responsibility to inspect all plans and drawings of electrical assets in the vicinity before making any excavation deeper than 300mm – this includes installing street signs, fencing posts, star pickets, as well as any normal excavations.
- Check the location of all electrical underground cables shown on drawings provided by electricity companies.
- If the penetration or excavation work is within 500mm of any underground cable shown on the drawings, visually prove the cable location using non-destructive digging (i.e. hand digging or hydro-vac digging).
- Identify any nearby electrical assets such as electrical cabinets, cubicles, pillars, switch-boards and pits. The existence of nearby electrical assets will indicate the existence of electrical underground cables in the area.
- Avoid 'driving' metal poles or any other objects deeper than 300mm into the ground by making a mark 300mm from the ground end of the poles and objects.
- **Do not proceed** if you cannot maintain appropriate safe distance to the underground cables (refer to links below for more information).
- **Immediately notify the relevant electricity supplier** if you contact electrical cables (refer to contact numbers below).
- Be aware of, and take the same precautions for, other underground assets (such as gas, water, telco, etc.) which can also have serious consequences when damaged.
- Get a medical check if you receive an electric shock.

## More information

- ESV underground No Go Zones: <https://esv.vic.gov.au/technical-information/electrical-installations-and-infrastructure/no-go-zones/underground-assets/>.
- Worksafe Guide for undertaking work near underground assets: <https://content.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-06/ISBN-Guide-for-undertaking-work-near-underground-assets-2004-07.pdf>
- Dial before you dig: <https://www.1100.com.au/>

If you have contacted electrical assets, immediately call the relevant electricity suppliers:

**AusNet Services** [ausnetservices.com.au](http://ausnetservices.com.au)  
13 17 99

**CitiPower** [citipower.com.au/](http://citipower.com.au/)  
13 12 80

**Jemena** [jemena.com.au](http://jemena.com.au)  
13 16 26

**Powercor** [powercor.com.au](http://powercor.com.au)  
13 24 12

**United Energy** [unitedenergy.com.au](http://unitedenergy.com.au)  
13 20 99

## Who we are

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is 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 ESV website: [www.esv.vic.gov.au](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au)

You can call us on 03 9203 9700 or email [info@energysafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@energysafe.vic.gov.au)