



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
400 NORTH STREET
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

ANDREW G. PLACE
VICE CHAIRMAN

Public Meeting Statement Introducing Electrical Safety Month

In conjunction with National Electrical Safety Month, I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Commission to focus attention on electrical hazards at work and at home; for contractors and homeowners across the state to take steps to avoid accidents and injuries.

On most days we take electrical service for granted, but electricity is unforgiving and a moment of inattention can have devastating consequences. According to data compiled by the PUC's Electric Safety Division, an average of 24 serious injuries and six deaths occur each year in Pennsylvania. Of these, 48% of the serious injuries and 62% of the deaths are related to contractor activities.

As a first step to address these risks it is critical that contractors operating close to power lines contact the local utility to develop a safety plan. Utilities have electric safety sections on their websites to provide easy access to contact information, electric safety instructions and educational resources for precisely this purpose. Similarly, this Commission has recently updated it's website to provide links to these vital resources.

Precautions while working around power lines include:

1. Always look for wires before beginning any type of construction work. Pre-job planning is a major factor in preventing accidents.
2. NEVER use ladders with metallic rails near power lines.
3. Use a spotter where views may be obstructed, to ensure a safe work environment.
4. For voltages below 50 kilovolts, individuals, tools, and other objects must not come within 10 feet of an energized line. Distances are increased for voltages above 50 kilovolts. Utilities should be contacted to verify the voltage of power lines within the job site before beginning work.
5. Crane and derrick operators must contact the utility owner and adhere to OSHA rules when working within 20 feet of power lines.
6. Utilities stand ready, seven days a week, to send a representative to the job site to help make the work site safe. It is best to plan head and give the utility as much notice as possible so that project delays are avoided.

Homeowner safety is equally important. Similar to contractor safety guidance, the Commission and Pennsylvania's electric utilities have important safety guides on their websites to help ensure a safe environment in and around your home. Utility representatives can also visit your home to ensure precautions are in place before any work begins near a power line, including de-energizing your line or

placing protective sheathing on electrical wires to protect against contact. Additional precautions include:

1. Always look for wires before beginning any type of maintenance work around the home. Call your utility to develop a safety plan when working near wires and to identify wire voltages.
2. Again, keep yourself and all ladders and tools at least 10 feet from power lines. Always make sure that, if the ladder were to fall, it would not come into contact with power lines or electrical equipment. In any event, the use of non-metallic ladders is strongly encouraged.
3. Pool skimmers, paintbrush extensions and other similar tools should be of a non-conducting material and must be kept a minimum of 10 feet away from power lines for voltage less than 50 kilovolts.
4. Do not attempt to touch or trim trees that are closer than 10 feet to any power lines for voltages less than 50 kilovolts.
5. Downed power lines can present a significant risk. Stay at least 30 feet from any downed power line, and don't approach the utility pole or anything touching the line. Always assume a power line is energized. The safest technique for moving away from a downed line is to shuffle with your feet together and on the ground.
6. Do not touch any person, vehicle, or equipment that is in contact with electrified objects. If it is necessary to leave a contacted vehicle, the person should jump clear of it so that no parts of the body are in contact with the equipment and the ground at the same time.
7. Additionally, improper use of portable generators can lead to electrical fires or poisonous carbon monoxide gas. Never use a generator indoors, in your garage or basement, or in any enclosed space.

To ensure that no underground electrical wires, or other utility facilities, are located beneath an area being excavated, contractors and homeowners are reminded to always contact Pennsylvania's One-Call program by dialing 8-1-1 at least three days prior to digging. Every Pennsylvania utility participates in PA One-Call.

Lastly, this Commission has been reviewing additional steps that utilities and the Commission can take to enhance electric safety awareness. Recent steps include the previously mentioned improvements to the PUC's Electric Safety web page, and a focused educational effort through the release of weekly safety tips, a PUC video Q & A on electric safety, and social media outreach. Simultaneously, the Commission's Electric Safety Division is working closely with utilities to develop best practices, including safety elements such as:

- Homeowner and contractor access to utility safety experts and services;
- Proactive contractor outreach programs;
- Utility web access to electric safety information; and
- Social media outreach.

It is the Commission's goal to make a significant reduction in the number of electric safety injuries and deaths. The Commission will continue to monitor and improve upon our joint efforts with utilities to ensure that this is achieved.