



Risks from Overhead Power Lines



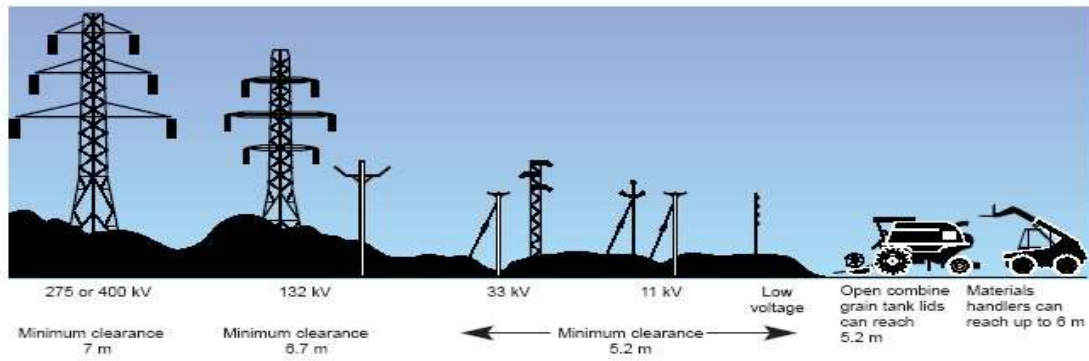
HSE report an average of two deaths a year due to accidents from coming into contact with overhead power lines during agricultural operations. If a piece of machinery or equipment gets too close to or comes into contact with, an overhead cable, then electricity will be conducted through the machine or equipment to earth. It may also pass through anyone who is touching it.

Electricity can arc, i.e. jump across gaps, so you (and your equipment or machinery) do not have to touch the lines to get a serious or fatal shock. The type of equipment involved can be: - telescopic handlers, fore end loaders, bale loaders, tractors and tipping trailers, but it can also occur during work activities such as stacking bales, use of ladders, jet of water or slurry, which can cause a discharge of electricity and risk of electric shock.

Common problems are that you may forget that OHPL's are there, or at the end of the day you may be rushing or tired and may forget to lower extension arms or the OHPL's may not be obvious if they run alongside hedges or beside lines of trees or they become difficult to see in the dark.

There are things you can do to help you be more aware of the risks.

- Be aware of the height of the power lines and voltages that run across your farm.
- Map the OHPL routes on the farm especially across yards, where you operate farm machinery or stack bails etc. (ask your farmer for copies of plans)
- Measure and know the maximum height and vertical reach of your equipment
- Plan your route – is there a different access route you can take to avoid low OHPL's
- Remember to retract extensions and be aware that driving over rough ground can cause booms to bounce around, reducing the safe clearance distance.
- Remember liquid slurry is a better conductor of electricity than water. No slurry should come within 30m of an OHPL (operate further away if it is windy)
- Be aware of CB radio aerials on tall vehicles
- Do not set up stacks or temporary structures near to OHPL's. There should be at least 9m horizontal clearance. Accessing stacks with equipment could reduce the distance between people and equipment and OHPL's.
- Display warning signs to remind workers and third parties.
- Put up barriers to prevent access or use goal posts where machinery has to pass under low OHPL's.
- The electricity company will reroute cables under ground in areas of high risk.



Emergency procedures.

The driver is usually safe if they remain in the cab of the vehicle. People are at risk if they make contact with the vehicle and earth.

- Do not touch the vehicle or anything attached to it.
- Lower the forks and drive out if you can.
- The driver or someone else must contact the electricity company to ask them to disconnect the power. Keep the number taped in the cab or stored on your mobile phone.
- If you need to get out because of an emergency, jump well clear without touching the machine, stay upright and run clear.
- Do not return to the machine until the power has been isolated.

Further information and resources can be found at these links: -

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais8.pdf

www.farmsafe.hseni.gov.uk/indg389