

Important Facts

Emergency Responders

Must Know About

LIVE WIRES

As an emergency response professional, you are frequently first on the scene when overhead electric wires come down as a result of storms, vehicles hitting utility poles or other causes.

You need to be aware of the hazards and the proper procedures whenever you come across a downed wire.



Orange & Rockland
Pike County Light & Power Co.
Rockland Electric Company

Key steps to staying safe.



- **Every downed power line should be considered dangerous.** If you spot a downed wire while on patrol, or if one is reported to you, notify Orange and Rockland and they will send a qualified technician to handle it.
- **A vehicle may be energized with electricity if a fallen wire is draped over it.** Remind the occupants that as long as they stay in the vehicle and don't touch the outside of the vehicle, they are safe.
Do not touch the vehicle yourself.
- **If a motorist exits an energized vehicle, serious injury or death could result.** The motorist could become part of the electric circuit between an energized wire and the ground if he or she steps out of the vehicle.
- **If occupants must exit the vehicle in a hurry, they must use extreme caution.** Instruct them to jump far and free of the vehicle with no part of their body or clothing touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time, and to try landing on their feet. Tell them not to run after leaping clear of the vehicle. Instead, they should use small shuffling steps without lifting either foot off the ground. They should continue to shuffle until they are well clear of the vehicle.
- **Keep yourself and others away from metal guide rails and roadside fences of all kinds.** A fallen wire touching dividers or fences can energize them for great distances.
- **Avoid the danger zone. Stay 50 feet or more away from fallen wires.** Keep onlookers back and out from under overhead lines. Set flares and reroute traffic, if necessary. Don't leave the site unattended; wait for the O&R crew to arrive.
- **Notify O&R.** When investigating motor vehicle accidents involving utility poles or structures, have your dispatcher notify O&R so they can inspect for damage, even if none is apparent to you.
- **Don't make reckless rescue attempts.** Remember, your rubber boots and rain gear are designed to protect you from getting wet — not from being electrocuted.

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should be considered
ARMED AND DANGEROUS.**

By understanding the safe procedures to follow around fallen electric wires, first responders can identify and take control of potentially dangerous incidents — thereby protecting their own lives and the lives of others.

- Under normal conditions, all of the different wires on a utility pole co-exist without creating a hazard. Whenever a pole is damaged due to lightning strikes or vehicle accidents, the safety status of those various wires can change instantly. Guy wires, phone lines and cable television wires can become entangled with power lines and thus become energized.

All broken or fallen wires should be considered ARMED AND DANGEROUS.

- In these situations, safety hazards are created, with the threat of serious or fatal injury.
- Some fallen wires bounce and twist, emitting sparks as they contact the ground. Others may lie quietly — no sparks, no sounds — but are potentially just as deadly, nonetheless.
- Most people assume downed lines to be “dead.” On the contrary, all broken or fallen wires — no matter how harmless they appear — should be considered “armed and dangerous.”
- Remember this: Electricity always seeks the shortest path to the ground. Don’t let yourself or others become that path.



As a First Responder, you can control potentially dangerous incidents around fallen electric wires if you understand the safe procedures to follow. This is critical in order to protect your own life and the lives of others.

O&R offers free electric safety training and demonstrations to local emergency response organizations. For program details, call O&R at 845-577-2407.

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