

The Most Common Equipment Involved in Power Line Contacts

In 2010, there were approximately 820 power line incidents in Alberta compared to 843 in 2009. While this is an encouraging downward trend, the severity of incidents actually increased with five fatalities (four involving farm operators and the fifth related to a recreational incident). This provides a solemn reminder of the need for ongoing power line safety awareness and education.

Among Operators of large equipment and truck drivers in Alberta, typically males 18 - 50 years old, the majority of power line contacts are associated with five common pieces of commercial and farm equipment (in order of prevalence).

COMMERCIAL EQUIPMENT

#1 TRACK HOES

- Track-hoe incidents are the most prevalent among contacts with power lines and account for about 25% of direct power line contacts in Alberta. These contacts (mostly overhead but in some cases underground) occur while the equipment is operating or being transported.
- The main reason for these contacts is that operators don't realize that the size of equipment has grown while the height of power lines has remained the same. When transporting track hoes, operators need to take into account the combined height of the trailer and the height of the track-hoe arm.

#2 BACK HOES

- Underground contacts have remained consistently high during the past few years.
- Back hoes are the second most prevalent piece of commercial equipment making contact with power lines; they lead in the number of underground power line contacts. Unfortunately, it is not clear what is driving the issue: failure to get a proper line locate done or inexperience in working with marked utility lines.

#3 GRAVEL/DUMP TRUCKS

- Gravel/dump trucks is the third-highest category of commercial equipment making contact with power lines, including driving with the box in the "up" position.

FARM EQUIPMENT

#4 & #5 AIR SEEDERS AND SPRAYERS

- Many farmers have been working the same piece of land for generations, safely passing under power lines. But during the busy spring and fall seasons, farmers sometimes fail to notice these same power lines. Increased equipment size – from tractors to implements – makes the situation worse as the equipment may be too high to pass safely under a power line.
- In 2010, farm equipment power line contacts accounted for about 21% of all power line contacts. At least 10 contacts were a result of air seeders or sprayers, in the transport position, snagging a power line.
- There were four farm fatalities in Alberta in 2010. Three of these resulted from farmers moving grain augers into energized power lines. The fourth fatality occurred when a farmer moved a piece of equipment and contacted a power line.

RAISING THE BAR ON SAFETY

Height regulations for all industries

If equipment is over 4.15 metres high and will be travelling on a public road or highway in Alberta, it's considered over-height and requires a permit from Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation for transporting on public roads. If equipment is over 5.3 metres, the local utility must also be contacted in advance of the move.

STAY "7 METRES SAFE"

It can be the distance between life and death

An Operator and his equipment must stay a minimum of seven metres away from overhead power lines. When working closer, call the utility company. Always call **Alberta One Call (1-800-242-3447)** before digging to avoid hitting underground power lines.

Learn more about staying safe at www.wherestheline.ca

FOR JUST MEDIA INQUIRIES, CONTACT:

Lyndsay Thorlacius, Chair, Joint Utility Safety Team
(403) 267-5919
lyndsay.thorlacius@altalink.ca

WHERE'S THE LINE?
POWER LINE SAFETY