

Overhead Power Lines

About 10 minutes to deliver

You do not have to touch a line to be killed by one. Clearance distances, who has to keep them, and the rule about staying in the truck.

Electricity does not need contact at high voltage — it will arc across a gap to reach ground. Which is why the rules are about distance, not touching.

THE CLEARANCE

For equipment operating near lines up to 350 kV, 1926.1408 Table A sets the minimum clearance from any part of the equipment, the load line, the load or the rigging:

- Up to 50 kV — 10 feet
- Over 50 to 200 kV — 15 feet
- Over 200 to 350 kV — 20 feet

If you cannot identify the voltage, assume the worst and use the larger distance. For assembling or disassembling equipment near lines, 1926.1407 requires 20 feet regardless.

The distance belongs to everything that moves — a boom, a raised dump bed, a scaffold being carried, a ladder on a shoulder, a length of conduit, a scissor lift, a pole for a sign. Most electrocutions from overhead lines do not involve a crane.

BEFORE THE WORK STARTS

- Look up. Every time, on every site, at every new position. Lines are grey against a grey sky and nobody sees them by accident.
- Ask the utility. De-energising and grounding the line, or having it covered or moved, is the only control that actually removes the hazard. Everything else is a distance you have to keep all day.
- Treat every line as live and as bare, including the ones that "look insulated". The covering on a distribution line is weatherproofing, not insulation.
- Set a dedicated spotter whose only job is watching the gap, with the authority to stop the work.
- 1926.416(a)(1) is the general rule for everyone else: no work in proximity to an energised circuit unless it is de-energised and grounded, or effectively guarded.

IF CONTACT HAPPENS

- Stay in the machine. Inside the cab you are not part of a path to ground. The wheels and the ground are.
- Keep everybody away. The ground around the contact is energised, and voltage falls off with distance — step across that gradient with your feet apart and it goes up one leg and down the other.
- If you must get out because of fire, jump clear so you are never touching the machine and the ground at once, land with your feet together, and shuffle or hop away in small steps, feet touching, until you are well clear.
- Call the utility. Nobody touches anything until they say the line is dead.

ASK THE CREW

- Are there lines over any part of today's work, and what is the voltage?
- What is the tallest thing we are moving or raising today?
- If the boom touches a line, what does everyone on the ground do?

29 CFR 1926.1408 · 29 CFR 1926.416 · 29 CFR 1926.1407

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Overhead Power Lines

About 10 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.1408 · 29 CFR 1926.416 · 29 CFR 1926.1407

DateJob / site

Delivered byCompany

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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