

Fires and transmission line safety



Safety is essential every day for our landholders, community, first responders and our people.

About this brochure

Fires underneath or near transmission lines pose a safety risk for the community and have the potential to interrupt power supply. This brochure provides important safety information for community members and first responders to any fire-related incident.

Safety risks

Fires with a flame height greater than one metre burning adjacent to or under transmission lines have the potential to:

- Create electrical arcs (known as 'flashovers') that can endanger people, animals and objects.
- Damage or destroy the wires, insulators and supports of the transmission line.
- Interrupt power supply to households, business and industry.

Report all fires near transmission lines

If you see a fire burning underneath or near a transmission line and property or lives are at risk, ring Emergency Services immediately by calling Triple Zero (000).

All fires underneath or near a transmission line should be reported to us as soon as possible by calling 1800 353 031, even if you are unsure what risk they pose.

Advise of all planned activities involving fire near transmission lines

Seek our advice as early as possible before undertaking any activity involving fire near our transmission lines by calling 1800 353 031. Early notification can ensure an appropriate response is taken should the fire escalate for any reason and potentially impact the transmission network.

Safety advice for fires near transmission lines

For your safety, when there is a fire close to a transmission line remember:

- Keep personnel, vehicles and attachments at least 25 metres away from the transmission line.
- Electricity, especially at high voltages, can 'jump' across several metres of air gap. This means that direct contact with the transmission wire or conductor is not required to produce a potentially fatal event.
- Smoke can act as a conductor. Fires burning on or near transmission line easements can greatly increase the chances of a flashover occurring.
- Don't count on rubber tyres on vehicles to stop a flashover from occurring.
- Wires on transmission lines sag lower in times of high demand, high temperatures and fires, reducing the ground clearance.
- Don't stockpile, windrow or heap combustible material under transmission lines.
- Exercise caution if using transmission line easements:
 - to access fire locations
 - as readymade firebreaks
 - as a break from which to commence back-burning operations
 - or as a refuge area in a firestorm.

Fighting fires near powerlines

Energy Networks Australia, in consultation with emergency services groups across Australia, has produced *National Guidelines on Electrical Safety for Emergency Personnel*. We endorse the use of these guidelines.

The industry guidelines provide critical information relating specifically to fire control near transmission lines, including the special conditions that apply to the use of water in fire control activities.

For your reference, an extract from the *National Guidelines on Electrical Safety for Emergency Personnel* is included in this document. A full version of the industry guidelines may be purchased from www.saiglobal.com or by calling 131 242.

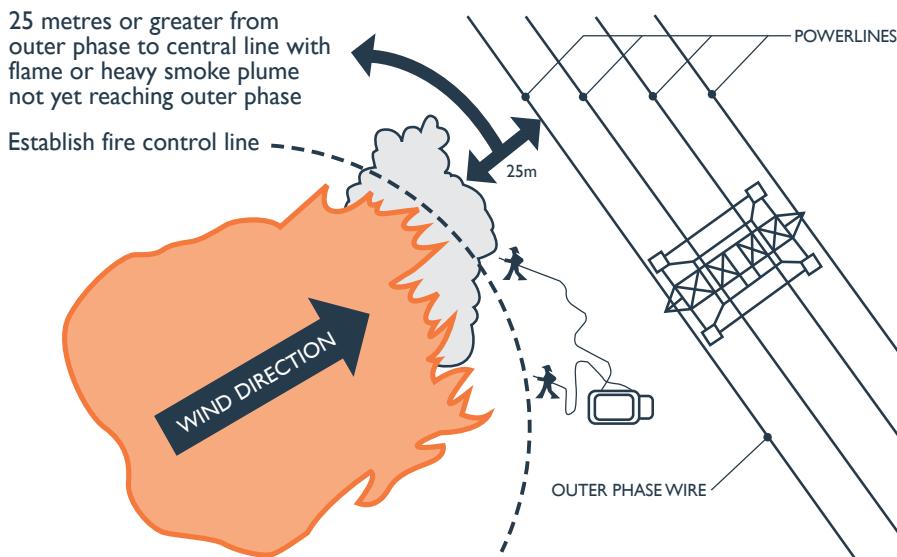
If you are involved in fire management or control near transmission lines, please familiarise yourself with these guidelines and the recommended control measures.

Fires and transmission line safety

Below is an extract from the National Guidelines on Electrical Safety for Emergency Personnel.

Hazards	Control measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sagging wires due to failures or high temperature.Wood pole structures may fail causing wire to fall.Flashover may occur between wires or from wires to the ground or structures through burning vegetation (this may be seen as a flash or heard as an explosion).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not directly attack fires in cleared areas beneath lines.Do not spray water on or near wires or insulators from the ground or air.Wait for fire to burn clear of the cleared areas beneath the lines before commencing a mop-up operation.At all times treat the line as live until clearance has been given by Electricity Company ON SITE.At all times keep personnel and vehicles at a minimum of 25 metres clear of a headfire, or a flank fire burning under or within 25 metres of the powerlines (see following Figure illustrating a firefighting operation).When working near or under live powerlines, approach no closer than 25 metres to the fire edge to conduct mop-up of grass fires. Mop-up may include the knockdown of low (less than two metres high) isolated flames/spots/smouldering logs which are not producing a convection column or heavy smoke plume. In such cases:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Never direct the hose stream into the powerline.- Never direct the hose stream into a smoke plume that is near (less than 25 metres from) or reaching power lines. Keep stream no higher than a person's head height.- Never direct the hose stream at a burning bush or tree (more than head height) in a powerline easement.Bushes or trees burning in powerline easement present a real threat of creating a flashover to earth from the wires – keep at least 25 metres clear.When crossing powerline easement, ensure there is adequate clearance (which will vary between three metres to eight metres depending on the voltage of the line) between the highest point of the vehicle (including aerials) and powerlines, avoiding areas with tall vegetation under lines.

Firefighting operation where fire and smoke plume are greater than 25 metres from transmission lines



Note: Major powerlines are critical infrastructure. They support essential community services and their de-energisation may have significant impact on public safety. Some smaller lines directly service critical sites such as sewerage, water and communication facilities.

It is therefore preferable not to attempt fire control activities near energised lines where possible.

Where fire control activities ('hazard reduction') are still considered necessary from the cleared area under lines, early advice to the Electricity Company will allow an assessment of risks associated with de-energising the line.

Contact Us

Further information about Powerlink and our projects can be downloaded from www.powerlink.com.au

General Enquiries FREECALL 1800 635 369 (during business hours) and ask for Easement Maintenance

In case of emergency FREECALL 1800 353 031 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Email Easementmaintenance@powerlink.com.au

www.powerlink.com.au |



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