

Harvester brings down farmyard overhead power line

What happened?

The harvesting team were taking access through a farmyard to a harvesting block. The boom of the harvester snagged a 'private' overhead power line which was running from roof to roof of the farm buildings. The cable broke and fell to the ground.

The powerline had not been seen or identified at the worksite scoping visit and the machine driver did not notice it on the day.

The cable was carrying 230 volts and was coated in an insulating black plastic sheath.

'Private' overhead powerlines are not uncommon around old farms and steadings. As they have not been installed by the Electricity Network Operator, they may not have been built or maintained to meet the electrical industry safety standards.

- They may not be set at the correct ground clearance heights or set at the correct safe distances from buildings and other structures
- They may have substandard and weak fixtures and fittings and may 'sag' excessively, especially during hot weather
- If they are uninsulated, the clearances between the 'live' and neutral and or earth line may not be to the industry standard
- They may not be fitted with or 'trip' the automatic surge monitoring device and so remain 'live' until physically disconnected
- They may not be fitted with high visibility warning signage
- They will not appear on Network Operators network maps
- In summary – **they may not look like a power line!**



This power line had reputedly been caught and brought down a number of times previously by other machinery accessing the farm.

The power line was insulated in black plastic. While this greatly reduces the likelihood of electrocution if contact is made with it, the insulation may be damaged by the contact or the fall, it may be cracked or worn with exposure to the elements. All outdoor 'insulated' power lines should be treated as 'live' until proven otherwise.

Positives

No one was hurt in the incident and there was no identified discharge of electricity either to the machine or to the ground when the cable fell.

The harvesting team made the area safe and immediately reported the incident. The power was disconnected, and the broken cable was made safe.

The power line has now been undergrounded.

Prevention

It is a Forest Industry requirement for all machinery to prominently display within the cab an 'electricity warning sign and the machine heights in its travelling modes'.

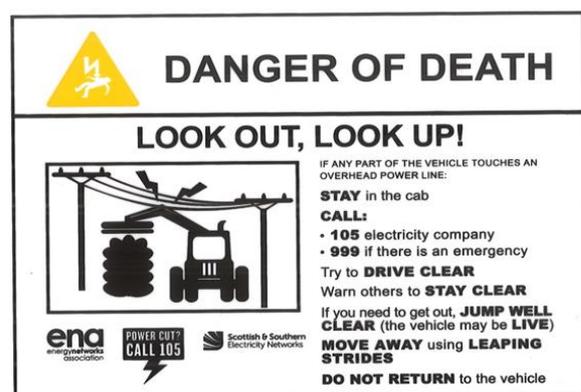
If your machine does not have one, and you would like one for **free**, contact your local Scottish Woodlands Manager or Office, we are holding a stock for harvesters, forwarders, excavators and timber lorries.



Response

Know what to do if your machine contacts an overhead powerline.

The Energy Networks Association have produced an incident response cab sticker for forestry/farm machinery. If you would like one for your machine, for **free**, contact your local Scottish Woodlands Manager or Office as we are currently holding a stock.



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