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# ***Worker Beware***<sup>®</sup>

## **Electrical Safety Guide**

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# Introduction

The *Worker Beware* safety program from your FirstEnergy electric company is designed to provide contractors with information that will assist them in working safely around overhead and underground power lines.

This safety guide will help you make the most of the *Worker Beware* program. It contains five sections:

- **Know Your Audience** — An overview of contractors' learning preferences
- **Electricity Basics** — Information on how electricity works and some terms to know
- **Plan Your Session** — Tips for preparing an effective information session
- **Your Five-Step Meeting for Survival** — Step-by-step safety guidance
- **Before and After Quiz** — Electrical safety quiz to help presenters and participants evaluate the program's impact

## Section One: Know Your Audience

Understanding how contractors learn best will help you tailor your information session to this unique audience. Take into consideration the following:

- **Contractors are focused on working efficiently.** Contractors may face pressure to cut corners where safety is concerned in the interest of saving time and money. Acknowledging this from the start — and cautioning against it — will put you all on the same page.
- **Contractors tend to be action-oriented learners** who do best when given an opportunity to practice and repeat recommended behaviors.
- **Contractors prefer practical (rather than theoretical) information.** Keep the focus on real-life situations.

## Section Two: Electricity Basics

This section will help you answer questions about electricity from session participants.

### *What is electricity?*

Electricity results from the flow of electrons between atoms that occurs when atoms carry different charges. Electrons are negatively charged and flow to positively charged atoms until the charge is level or neutral.

- The flow of electrons is called **current**. Current is measured in **amperes**, or **amps** for short.
- The force propelling the flow of electrons is measured in **voltage**, or **volts** for short.
- When an object or substance limits the flow of current, this property is called **resistance**. Resistance is measured in **ohms**.
- Materials with a high level of resistance are called **insulators**. Common insulators include porcelain, plastics, and air. These materials do not allow electricity to pass through them easily. (However, even insulators can conduct electricity under certain conditions.)

- Materials with a low level of resistance are called **conductors**. Common conductors include water, most metals, and the human body. Electricity can pass easily through these materials under almost all conditions.

### ***The electricity distribution system***

Most of the nation's electricity is generated at power plants.

Wires on tall transmission towers carry high-voltage electricity from power plants to substations, where the voltage is reduced. From substations, electricity travels on wires that branch out down streets, either overhead or underground.

Overhead and underground power lines carry electricity to transformers on poles or on the ground, where the voltage is reduced again to a level for typical use. From transformers, electricity travels into buildings through service drop wires. These wires connect to the circuit breaker box, which is connected to all the wires that energize wall outlets and switches.

**Note that electric-line workers receive extensive training and are experts in handling power lines.** They also have special equipment for handling electric infrastructure. Even with training, please understand that electricity is dangerous and all workers need to be very careful around electrical equipment.

## **Section Three: Plan Your Session**

A well-organized, informed instructor will gain participants' respect and be far more effective. Below are some recommendations to help you prepare for the electrical safety information session with confidence.

### ***Know your material***

Always preview the materials before showing them to session participants. Gathering information in advance can be useful and make the materials more relevant. Review all the materials and rehearse your presentation well before the session.

### ***Make the material relevant***

Identify the key situations that contractors in your session may encounter, and focus the group's attention on these topics during the meeting:

- **What job site situations** bring them close to overhead power lines?
- **What type of long or tall equipment do they use** that might come into contact with overhead power lines?
- **What type of digging activities** might bring them close to underground power lines?
- **What electrical hazards** have participants encountered in the past? Recently?

### ***Tailor the session to the meeting space, audience size, and allotted time***

Remember that contractors are hands-on, action-oriented learners. The session will need to include opportunities to simulate recommended practices and to discuss potential applications of the material. Room size and arrangement can have a measurable impact on the participation level. Consider the following:

- **Will all materials be visible** to all participants, or do you need additional space or equipment?

- **Are the seats arranged in a way** that will foster discussion?
- **Is there adequate space** for participants to conduct simulations?
- **Is there adequate lighting** for all participants to see the instructor and materials and to take notes if necessary?
- **Will everyone be able to hear?**

Just as room and audience size can impact the effectiveness of a meeting, so can session time. No one learns well sitting for long periods. However, cramming too much information into a short session can reduce retention. Plan your session to allow time for discussions and simulations. If there is not time for all the materials, consider which will be most effective for participants.

## Section Four: Your Five-Step Meeting for Survival

Follow these steps for a high-impact meeting that will keep participants involved and reinforce essential safety information:

### ***1) Advertise the meeting.***

Post a notice well in advance of the meeting in a highly visible location.

### ***2) Pass a sign-in sheet.***

Keep attendance records of all safety meetings. Someday you may have to show who attended the meeting, what the session covered, and when it was held.

### ***3) Offer an overview.***

Tell participants what you will cover in the meeting and what you hope they will learn. This is a good time to convey the importance of this information — that it can help protect contractors, their coworkers, and the public from electricity-related injury or death.

### ***4) Present the Worker Beware materials.***

Discuss the electrical safety information in these materials and the electrical emergencies participants might encounter. Review these vital safety tips with participants periodically to refresh their memories.

### ***5) Conduct a discussion.***

Participants will retain more information if they get involved in a discussion. Here are some ideas:

- **Remind participants of the circumstances of any recent power line contacts** in your region. Discuss how information in the materials is relevant to those incidents.
- **Stress the requirement of contractors keeping themselves, their tools, their equipment, and their vehicles the required distances away from overhead power lines.**
  - **When cranes or derricks are used in construction**, keep the crane boom and load **at least 20 feet away** from lines up to 350 kV and 50 feet away from lines over 350 kV and up to 1000 kV. Always assume the line is energized, and allow nothing closer unless you have confirmed with the utility owner/operator that the line has been de-energized. For specific requirements, consult **osha.gov**.

- **For tools and equipment other than cranes and derricks used in construction,** OSHA requires *at least 10 feet* of clearance from power lines carrying up to 50 kV. If you are unsure of the voltage, contact your FirstEnergy electric company.
- **As voltage increases, clearance distances also increase.** Contact your FirstEnergy electric company and consult the OSHA regulations at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov) for specific safety clearance requirements.

Discuss how these rules apply to them and situations they may encounter.

- **Review proper 811 notification procedures, the wait time for your state, and the utility color code.** Discuss why following the law and allowing extra time for a utility to locate lines can save time and money in the long run. Discuss additional safety measures, such as asking the property owner about underground lines. Remind participants to always contact their state 811 center before digging and for the most current requirements.
- **Invite participants to ask questions** about the materials and the safety procedures they outline. If they have questions you can't answer, research the answers yourself, and provide that information as soon as possible.
- **Ask participants to brainstorm a list of key safety issues** identified in the materials. Review these key issues and discuss incidents that resulted when related safety precautions were ignored. What were the consequences?
- **Ask each participant to name one thing they learned** from the materials or discussion that will help them be safer in the future.

Remember that discussion is intended to reinforce proper behavior — NOT to call out or embarrass participants. Maintain a cooperative, supportive atmosphere at all times, and encourage participants to ask questions and provide feedback.

## Section Five: Electrical Safety Quiz

The quiz on the next page is intended to help instructors and participants assess the program's effectiveness. Administer it before beginning the meeting, and ask participants to record their answers in the "Before" column. Then administer it again at the end of the session and ask participants to list answers in the "After" column. The quiz is designed for two-sided photocopying.

Quiz Answers:

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. D
5. D
6. A
7. B
8. A
9. D
10. B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Worker Beware* Electrical Safety Quiz**

**Before**

**Questions**

**After**

\_\_\_\_\_ **1. For tools and equipment other than cranes or derricks used in construction, what is the *minimum* safe clearance from overhead power lines?** \_\_\_\_\_

- A. 6 inches
- B. 100 feet
- C. 10 feet
- D. 5 feet

\_\_\_\_\_ **2. What is the color of the locator marks for underground electric power lines?** \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Yellow
- B. Red
- C. Orange
- D. None of the above

\_\_\_\_\_ **3. If you must work closer than the safe clearance distance from overhead power lines, which of the following should you do?** \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Attempt to disconnect electrical service
- B. Call your FirstEnergy electric company in advance to make arrangements
- C. Evacuate nearby homes
- D. Both A and C

\_\_\_\_\_ **4. What does the law require that you do to determine the location of underground power lines before digging on a job site?** \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Look for right-of-way markers
- B. Check your maps
- C. Call your local electric utility
- D. Notify 811

\_\_\_\_\_ **5. How should you assist a coworker who contacts a power line while operating heavy equipment?** \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Call 911 immediately
- B. Encourage him/her to stay on the equipment until electric utility workers signal them off
- C. If there is danger from fire or another hazard, tell them to jump clear of the equipment, land with your feet together, and shuffle *at least 30 feet away*
- D. All of the above

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Before

Questions

After

- \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. True or false? Before digging, you should ask the property owner about any private underground lines that may not be marked by the locator.**
- A. True
  - B. False
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What is the job of a spotter?**
- A. To stabilize a load
  - B. To prevent equipment from contacting power lines
  - C. Both A and B
  - D. None of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. True or false? Your body can conduct electricity.**
- A. True
  - B. False
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. If your equipment contacts a power line and you are not in imminent danger, you should:**
- A. Move the equipment away from the line if possible
  - B. Stay on the equipment and warn others to stay away
  - C. Have someone call 911 immediately
  - D. All of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. True or false? You cannot be shocked by a service drop wire.**
- A. True
  - B. False
- \_\_\_\_\_