

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Working near overhead and underground electric lines

#### **1. What is the purpose of Safety Advice?**

Where a person responsible for a worksite identifies that in performing their work, there is a reasonable likelihood that a person, plant or vehicle could encroach an exclusion zone around exposed live parts (refer Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 Working near overhead and underground electric lines), the person must contact Ergon Energy to request Safety Advice. Ergon Energy will identify the electrical hazard and implement or instruct control measures required by responsible person to reduce the likelihood of harm to person, plant or vehicle.

#### **2. Where can I obtain a copy of the Electrical Safety Code of Practice for Working near overhead and underground electric lines?**

An electronic copy is available at the Worksafe Queensland internet site.

[https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/59676/es-code-of-practice-2010-working-near-overhead-underground-electric-lines.pdf](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/59676/es-code-of-practice-2010-working-near-overhead-underground-electric-lines.pdf)

#### **3. Do I have to have a hard copy of the Electrical Safety Code of Practice for Working near overhead and underground electric lines at site when complying with the Safety Advice requirements?**

It is strongly recommended that the Responsible Person has a hard copy of the Code of Practice at site and is familiar with its contents.

#### **4. Can I ring up and request Safety Advice over the phone without having to fill out a Safety Advice Request form?**

No. Irrespective of how the enquiry is made (phone, email, etc), a signed, completed Safety Advice Request form must be submitted to Ergon Energy's Technical Regulatory team by email.

#### **5. Do I have to call the Ergon Energy National Contact Centre each time I am submitting a signed completed Safety Advice Request form?**

No. The signed, completed Safety Advice Request Form must be emailed to the Technical Regulatory team.

#### **6. How much will it cost for Ergon Energy to provide me with Safety Advice?**

Ergon Energy does not charge for the Safety Advice however, additional charges will be applied if additional control measures such as Tiger tails or other works are required to be completed by Ergon Energy in relation to the Safety Advice (e.g. temporary disconnection of Low Voltage service or provision of Safety Observer).

#### **7. I have submitted a written Safety Advice Request. Can I still go ahead with the planned work while waiting for the Safety Advice to be issued?**

Only if mandatory exclusion zones and clearances are maintained. Refer to Appendix B: Exclusion zones for electrical parts within the Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 Working near overhead and underground electric lines.

If you cannot maintain mandatory exclusion zones and clearances at site, work must not proceed until inspection is conducted by an Ergon Energy Electricity Officer and Safety Advice is issued.

#### **8. I don't have Safety Advice, is it OK to erect scaffolding up close around the low voltage service line so long as we don't make contact with it?**

No. Only if mandatory exclusion zones and clearances are maintained, can you proceed with work at a site prior to Safety Advice being issued.

Refer to Appendix B: Exclusion zones for electrical parts within the Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 Working near overhead and underground electric lines.

**9. I can't go to site to receive a copy of the issued Safety Advice. Can it be faxed or emailed to me so that I can sign it and return the signed copy to Ergon Energy?**

A copy of the completed Safety Advice cannot be faxed, emailed or posted for you to sign and return.

The Responsible Person must be clearly instructed and confirm understanding as to the electrical hazards, exclusion zones that apply, and control measures required to be implemented. A written Safety Advice should be issued at site to, and signed by, the Responsible Person named on the completed Safety Advice Form.

**10. At this premises, I have various companies working near the service line over a period of time (scaffolder, builder, painter, plumber, etc). Can they all be covered by the one Safety Advice?**

Yes. The issued Safety Advice should include a note for the named Responsible Person at site to advise all other workers of the electrical hazards and required control measures applicable to the Safety Advice.

**11. Do I still require Safety Advice to be issued by Ergon Energy for working around a private power pole on my property?**

No. The customer is responsible for the private line and should seek advice from their own electrical contractor and comply with the requirements of Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 Working near overhead and underground electric lines.

**12. What are the implications of performing work near exposed live parts without a Safety Advice in situations where a Safety Advice would be required to be issued by Ergon Energy?**

Risk of injury or death and/or fines from the Electrical Safety Office or Workplace Health and Safety Office.

**13. An Electrical Safety Office (or Workplace Health and Safety) Inspector came to site and stopped us working near the overhead electric lines and instructed us to obtain Safety Advice from Ergon Energy. What happens now, can we continue working until the Safety Advice is issued?**

No, subject to Electrical Safety Office (or Workplace Health and Safety) directives. You are required to submit a Safety Advice Request Form to Ergon Energy to obtain Safety Advice.

**14. How can a person complete training to become an Authorised Person?**

There are a number of Registered Training Organisations available that provide training to gain the required skills and knowledge to become an Authorised Person. NOTE: after completing the training, an employer is required to submit an Authorised Person application letter to gain approval from Ergon Energy for employees requiring this authorisation. Contact Ergon Energy Technical Regulatory team by email for details of how to apply for Authorised Person approval.

**15. Can an electrical contractor access the low voltage service at the point of attachment to replace the mains connection box for the installation?**

Only if the electrical contractor is authorised by Ergon Energy as an Authorised Person and only if the service line has been isolated by removal of service fuse for the purpose of work on consumer mains or switchboard.

The electrical contractor:

- Must have in place a documented safe system of work, appropriate tools and Personal Protective Equipment to perform this work.
- Can only remove Low Voltage service fuses for isolation purposes and cannot replace blown service fuses.

**16. How close and how deep can I excavate near Ergon Energy power poles or structures?**

Electricity Entity Requirements: Working Around Overhead and Underground Electric Lines provides guidance on excavation near Ergon Energy poles or structures. Prior to excavation within no go zone, a Safety Advice will be required. Consideration must be undertaken for presence of underground cable in vicinity of the poles or structures.

**17. I have a pile of debris underneath the Ergon Energy power line on my property, can I burn it off?**

No. There is a risk the fire could cause damage to the conductors, cross arms and or pole posing an electrical risk to persons in the vicinity.

**18. Can I build a dam or earthworks underneath an Ergon Energy power line?**

Excavating, filling and altering of land may be acceptable (e.g. building a dam or earthworks) but full details need to be provided to Ergon Energy for assessment prior to starting work on the dam (refer Electricity Entity Requirements: Working Around Overhead and Underground Electric Lines).

**19. Can I stack hay bales, other agricultural equipment, etc underneath an Ergon Energy power line?**

Yes. As long as minimum clearances and exclusion zones are maintained and requirements of Electrical Safety Code of Practice 2010 Working near overhead and underground electric lines and Electricity Entity Requirements: Working Around Overhead and Underground Electric Lines are complied with.

**20. Can I have items, signs or banners erected on Ergon Energy poles?**

Written agreement must be obtained first. Only items, signs or banners which are exclusively for community events are permitted to be erected on Ergon Energy poles by Ergon Energy staff, refer Requirement for Attachments on Ergon Energy poles

**21. Can I paint an Ergon Energy pole or structure (e.g. padmount substation)?**

Decorative Painting of Distribution Assets sets out the requirements and conditions under which these may be painted and Safety Advice will be required. Note that there will some poles or structures that you will not be permitted to paint.

**22. Can a customer or worker touch an LV service line connecting to the premises?**

No. LV service lines are only to be worked on by Ergon Energy employees or approved Ergon Energy contractors.

**23. Can I touch a service line which has a tiger tail fitted on it?**

No. Tiger Tails are only installed to provide a visual indication of the location of the service line, and do not provide safe electrical insulation.

**24. Can I put up my own tiger tails (or have my electrical contractor, builder, etc erect them) on the Ergon Energy service line?**

No. LV service lines are only to be worked on by Ergon Energy employees or approved Ergon Energy contractors. This also includes putting up and removing tiger tails.

**25. In lieu of having tiger tails erected, can I place a plastic hose or conduit along the LV service line to protect it while building work proceeds?**

No. Under no circumstances are you permitted to contact or attach any item to the service line.

**26. Can the Ergon Energy overhead low voltage service line or underground consumer mains be temporarily isolated to permit building work to proceed?**

Yes. A service fee may apply for Ergon Energy to perform this work. To make arrangements for the temporary de-energisation, call the Ergon Energy National Contact Centre on 13 10 46.

**27. Can my electrical contractor temporarily isolate the service line to my premises to permit building work to proceed?**

Yes only if the electrical contractor is authorised by Ergon Energy as an Authorised Person and if the service line has been isolated by removal of service fuse for the purpose of work on consumer mains or switchboard. The electrical contractor cannot replace blown service fuses.

The electrical contractor:

- Must have in place a documented safe system of work, appropriate tools and Personal Protective Equipment to perform this work.
- Can only remove Low Voltage service fuse (pole or underground turret) for isolation purposes. LV service fuse on pole must only be removed from ground (no climbing pole).

**28. How close can a structure (shed, house, etc) be built near an overhead power line?**

Distances will vary depending on voltage level of conductors involved. Refer to minimum distances set out in Schedule 4 and 5 of the Electrical Safety Regulation 2013.

If the power lines are located on an easement across your property, the requirements set out in Electricity Entity Requirements: Working Around Overhead and Underground Electric Lines must be complied with.

**29. Can a house, shed or other structure be built on a power line easement?**

No. Refer requirements outlined in Electricity Entity Requirements: Working Around Overhead and Underground Electric Lines.

**30. Can a swimming pool be installed in a yard beneath an overhead service line or mains?**

No. Ergon Energy will not erect or replace an overhead service line over a swimming pool, spa or hazardous area.

**31. What do I need to consider when digging around underground electrical assets (cables, conduits, earth wires)?**

Suggested Guidelines for Excavation Near Underground Electrical Assets:

- Contact DBYD (to determine if any underground electrical assets are, or may be, located in the vicinity of where the excavation work is to be performed.
- Determine exact location and depth of each underground electrical asset in vicinity of excavation work by use of cable locator (via external provider); or pot holing cable using Hydro Vac excavation or hand digging methods.
- Avoid using mechanical excavation equipment until such time that exact location and depth of underground electrical assets are identified by non-mechanical methods to avoid contacting and damaging underground electrical assets.
- Have a documented safe system of work in place to determine the risk and likelihood of contact or damage to the underground electrical assets.
- Ensure that information obtained is considered in planning work and that this information is given to each person who is to do mechanical excavation work at or near the location of underground electrical asset.
- Seek Safety Advice if there is a risk of the any underground electrical asset being disturbed, unsupported or damaged during excavation.