

# SCAFFOLD SAFETY



The erection of scaffolding too close to live electricity conductors can place you, your staff and the public at serious risk of potentially fatal personal injury.

Following information provides a basic guide to help you remain safe when working or planning scaffolding activities, near or around overhead electricity lines.



## Some General Key Points

- Overhead electricity systems in the Isle of Man carry voltages ranging from 33,000 volts to 230 volts (domestic voltage). Even domestic voltage can be lethal.
- **Never assume** that electrical equipment is dead, even if the wires have fallen or broken.
- Even if you are sure the power is off. **Remember that** the power can be switched back on at any time, without warning.
- Touching electricity wires or objects/persons in contact with the wires **can be fatal**.
- Even the lowest voltage overhead lines can produce **10,000 times more current** than is required to kill a person.
- Electricity can jump gaps.
- Rubber boots **will not protect you**.
- Trees, string, ropes, suspension lines and water can conduct electricity.
- Most overhead electricity wires are not insulated.
- Don't assume wires on wood poles are telephone wires.

## What are the risks to you?

Overhead electricity lines are erected above a statutory minimum height that, in normal circumstances, places them safely out of reach. However, anyone carrying long scaffold poles or erecting/working on tall structures is at an increased risk of contact with live conductors.

## How could this happen?

In recent years, **numerous people have been injured or killed** whilst erecting or working on scaffolding structures. This happened because they, or the items they were carrying, inadvertently came into contact with, or too close to live overhead lines.

Also, any scaffolding that is too close to, or in contact with, live electricity conductors could itself become live and this could pose a serious, potentially fatal, hazard to anyone in the vicinity on the ground.

- Before setting up any scaffolding, it is important that you **LOOK OUT, LOOK UP**.
- Do not erect scaffolding within 3 metres of an overhead power line that is feeding houses or within 15 metres of a high voltage power line unless you have checked with us and we have confirmed it is safe to do so.
- Even if erecting scaffolding outside of these distances, please **take great care** when carrying and erecting long scaffold poles in the vicinity of overhead power lines.
- **Never** carry long scaffold poles vertically - **Always** carry them horizontally, as low to the ground as practicable.
- **Never** attach or tie any scaffolding to power line wood poles, or electrical equipment.
- **Never** attempt to cover, remove or re-site power lines yourself if they are in the way of your scaffolding - **THIS MUST ONLY BE DONE BY OUR OWN TRAINED PERSONNEL**.
- Even if the lines have been covered or “shrouded” - remember that the covering is generally only designed to protect against inadvertent contact - do not subject any lines to any heavy or prolonged contact/wear.

### Shrouding

We will fit SHROUDING free of charge, for a period of 4 weeks. Application forms are available from our Headquarters or can be *downloaded* from [www.manxutilities.im](http://www.manxutilities.im)

### Look for the signs

- Electricity poles are usually fitted with yellow "**Danger of Death**" notices.
- It is very difficult to judge the height of lines, **so do not attempt to do so**.
- **It is dangerous** to dismiss the lines as merely a telephone wire – It is very difficult to tell telephone and electricity wires apart.
- Always assume that all overhead lines carry live electricity and are dangerous.
- The best way to control the risk from live electricity lines is to consider the issue in your planning process. Get into the habit of taking a good look around for power lines every time you visit a new site.
- Consider adding a check box for **POWER LINE SAFETY** on your working instructions.
- Make sure **ALL** your staff and sub contractors are aware of the risks from power lines.
- If you have any doubts at any stage of your works always contact us on 687687
- To minimise any delays please give us as much notice as possible.
- Don't forget before starting work **LOOK OUT LOOK UP**.
- If in doubt **STOP & STAY AWAY**.



## Emergency Procedure

### What to do if your scaffolding comes into contact with an overhead line:

- Assume the line/wires are live, even if they are not sparking.
- Remember that, even if they are dead, the wires can become live again with no notice. This may occur automatically after a few seconds or up to several hours later if we are not aware that the line has been damaged.
- If you can, use your mobile telephone to call the emergency services. Give them your location as accurately as you can. Tell them there are electricity wires involved and ask them to contact us.
- If any of your equipment or vehicles are in contact with an electricity wire or close to a damaged overhead wire then move away as quickly as you can and stay away until the emergency services or we arrive.
- Once a wire is on the ground you do not have to touch it to be killed. The current may travel a significant distance through the ground and even further if the wire has fallen on a fence or other metallic objects. **Be Aware, Keep Clear.**
- If someone is stood on a scaffolding structure that is in contact with a line it is best for them to remain stationary, stood on the boards away from the metal poles. Keep everyone else clear. If staying on a scaffold structure would put you in serious danger (for example – if it is likely to collapse) and you have to get off, then always jump well clear rather than stepping out before moving away as quickly as you can. Make sure you do not touch the scaffold and the ground at the same time.
- Never touch any equipment, vehicle or material or any part of a scaffold structure that you suspect might be touching an electricity line even if you think the line is dead.
- The emergency services have been briefed on how to undertake rescues in proximity of damaged overhead lines. Our engineer will confirm when the power has been turned off and the rescue can proceed safely.
- Do not allow anyone to approach the scaffold until it is confirmed safe to do so by our Engineer.

See [OVERHEAD LINES](#) on our website for more information on safe working in the vicinity of our equipment. This information is based on guidance provided by ENA (Energy Networks Association) on behalf of electricity companies.

### How can I get further information or advice?

Further information can be found on our website [www.manxutilities.im](http://www.manxutilities.im) alternatively contact our Customer Services Team on 687687.

If you have any practical needs where we could help - for example providing this information in another format (eg large print or in a different language) or are having difficulties completing application forms please contact our Customer Services Team on 687687, during our office hours.

Our office hours are 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am - 4.30pm Friday.