

MEDIA RELEASE

Contacts with high voltage equipment continue to be a major concern

For Immediate Release:

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(St. John's, NL) – Newfoundland and Labrador's Electrical Contact Prevention Working Group (the Working Group) is expressing major concern over the number of contacts with electrical equipment and infrastructure. This is a serious issue which has the potential to seriously harm someone or cause death.

As of the end of July this year, Newfoundland Power recorded 40 incidents involving power lines or power line infrastructure, and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (Hydro) recorded 15 incidents within their service territory.

"Each contact with power lines has the real potential to be fatal, and there's no going back once it happens," emphasized Gary Murray, Vice President, Customer Operations and Engineering, Newfoundland Power. "Our objective is to work together to continue to raise awareness among those who work around power lines, reminding them to take every precaution to ensure they go home safely to their families at the end of every day."

Over the last two years, both utilities recorded more than 120 public incidents. The majority of these have involved contractors using equipment such as booms, cranes, tractor trailers, excavators, snow clearing equipment, dump trucks, scaffolds and ladders.



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“The number of power line contacts we see every year is an ongoing concern,” said Rob Henderson, Vice President, Hydro. “This is a very busy period for construction activities, so it is important for contractors and operators of heavy equipment to keep safety top of mind and be extra cautious when working near power lines. Sometimes important safety steps are skipped in order to get a job done quickly or workers become complacent. But good safety habits can mean the difference between life or death.”

The Working Group consists of members from Newfoundland Power, Hydro, Bell Aliant, the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association (NLCSA), Service NL, the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association (NLCA), The Canadian Home Builders’ Association-Newfoundland and Labrador (CHBA-NL), Operating Engineers College, Heavy Civil Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (HCANL), and Workplace Health Safety and Compensation Commission (the Commission).

The Working Group was formed in 2012 with a common goal: to eliminate electrical contacts made by contractors and the general public working around energized power lines. Through ongoing safety awareness and industry education, they are collectively committed to helping foster a long-term culture of power line safety in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Specific requirements for maintaining clearances and providing worker training are mandated by the province’s Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. Special permits are required from the utility to work closer than 5.5m from an energized power line. Operators of equipment with the capability of encroaching on or contacting overhead or underground power lines must complete a Commission approved Power Line Hazards safety course.

The Working Group wants to remind contractors and the general public that working around electricity requires their complete and undivided attention. Accidents can be prevented with proper planning, worksite evaluation and adhering to safe distances.

For more information on working safely around electrical equipment, visit newfoundlandpower.com (1.800.663.2802) or nlh.nl.ca (1.888.764.9376).



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