

Subject: Overhead Lines

Tool Box Talk No.: 023

Accidental contact with live overhead power lines causes many serious injuries and fatalities. These accidents are particularly related to cranes and excavators, but tipping wagons, scaffold tubes and metal ladders have all been in contact with overhead cables, with fatal results.

While your employer must provide a safe place of work - by having power lines re-routed, switched off or protected by 'goal posts' and barriers - you have a part to play as well.

If you have to work near overhead power lines, observe the following rules:-

- Treat all overhead lines as 'live' unless you have been specifically instructed otherwise. Do not assume they are only telephone wires.
- Get to know any maximum clearance requirements specified by the Electricity Board.
- Do not try to bypass 'goal posts' or barriers or other warnings.
- If you are a banksman, always keep the overhead lines in view when giving directions. Only direct plant under power lines where 'goal posts' are provided.
- If scaffolding is being erected adjacent to power lines, make sure that poles are handled a safe distance away.
- Never stack materials or tip under overhead lines. This could reduce the safe clearance and, in wet weather, result in a 'flash over' to earth. Equally, a tipper body may come dangerously near to the wires - or accidentally touch them - with disastrous results.
- If work has to be carried out under overhead wires, special precautions will be laid down by the Electricity Company or your employer. Make sure you have been instructed as to what they are.

