

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Electricity industry calls for safer working on farms, as over 1,000 overhead power lines incidents are reported over five years**

The UK's electricity network operators have joined forces to ensure those working in the agricultural industry understand the dangers of working near power lines, in a bid to reduce the number of incidents that take place each year. Despite potentially fatal consequences, over 85% of people never worry about getting too close to an overhead power line, according to the latest research from Energy Networks Association (ENA).

Data from the Health & Safety Executive reveals that in the last five years there were five deaths. In addition, there were also 1,140 near-miss incidents involving machinery and equipment contacting overhead electric power lines where serious injury or death was a possibility.

On average, one farm worker dies each year as a result of contact with an overhead power line. There have been five such fatalities in the last five years. There were 39 contact incidents in just four weeks during the 2017 harvest period and with each of these a potential for the vehicle operator or persons standing nearby suffering a fatal electric shock. That's a risk during harvest of more than one fatality per day.

The risk to farm workers is not only during harvest but all year round. Annually, approximately 225 reported incidents occur where farm vehicles and machinery make contact with overhead lines – typically these incidents involve equipment such as tipping trailers, lorry mounted cranes, combine harvesters and telehandlers. Not only does each incident have the potential to kill or seriously injure those workers involved, there are also financial costs in terms of damaged and destroyed equipment and lost time.

The electricity network operators are today launching a new campaign – Look Out Look Up! – in response to the scale of incidents involving overhead power lines in farms and fields. Look Out Look Up! is encouraging people to plan ahead to avoid contact with overhead power lines and to know what to do if contact is made.

A new film has been created to highlight the potential risks and can be found at <http://www.energynetworks.org/electricity/she/safety/safety-advice/overhead-power-lines-safety-campaign.html>

Advice for the agricultural and other sectors, such as construction and road haulage, whose work may take place near overhead power lines includes:

- Risk assess – know where overhead power lines are and mark them on a map. Find out the height and reach of your equipment and how this compares to the maximum working height under overhead power lines. Share this information with workers and contractors.
- Control measures – don't work near an overhead power line if you don't have to. Speak to your electricity network operator for advice. Select suitable machinery and equipment and use it safely.
- Know what's safe, and what isn't – certain work should be avoided within 10 metres of overhead power lines, such as stacking bales and potato boxes, operating telehandlers and moving irrigation pipes.
- It is crucial that farmers, farm workers and contractors understand that when overhead power lines are damaged or fall to the ground, they should stay well away and contact the local electricity company by telephoning 105.
- Know what to do if you come into contact with an overhead power line - if contact is made when you're in a vehicle, stay in the cab and try to drive clear. If it is not safe to stay in the vehicle, jump clear of the machine, move away and don't touch it once on the ground.
- Call 105 – if an incident occurs, contact your network operator by calling the national 24 hour emergency number 105. According to the ENA, over four in five people do not know the number to call in case of an abnormality in electricity supply in their home or workplace.

Fatal incidents involving farm workers in 2016/17 include a 36-year-old who was killed when a trailer he was tipping hit an overhead power line, and an 18-year-old who was electrocuted when he stepped out of his tractor cab after his tipping trailer came into contact with an overhead line. A 28-year-old died when a vehicle mounted crane he was using came into contact with an overhead line.

Ian Davey, a Cornish farmer who had a near fatal incident when a snap decision during combining had life-changing consequences, commented:

“Farming can be a dangerous occupation, and there is so much to do that we rush – but that is when accidents happen. The trailer I was in had touched a power line and, as I stepped out of the tractor cab holding the metal door, 11,000 volts shot through my body. I was literally stuck to the spot. The power surge dislocated my shoulder and shattered my arm. Doctors told me that it looked as though somebody had smashed the bone with a sledgehammer.

“It took almost leaving behind my two children and wife to mean I’m now careful and cautious on the farm, always thinking twice before doing anything. Things could have been different for me had I known the advice within Look Out Look Up!. If the campaign helps even one farmer avoid a potentially fatal contact with an overhead powerline, then it is absolutely worth it.”

Nick Summers, Head of Safety, Health & Environment at Energy Networks Association, said:

“There are too many incidents involving overhead power lines and agriculture workers. When incidents happen, they are serious. If a person comes into contact with an overhead power line, it will result in death or serious injury. Our research also showed that there is a misunderstanding surrounding the dangers of overhead power lines, with over two thirds (68%) of people not knowing the minimum distance between the ground and an overhead power line.

“That’s why we have launched this campaign and created a new information film. We want to prevent deaths and injury by making sure people know about the risks of working near overhead power lines, and how to avoid them.”

More information about the Look Out Look Up! campaign can be found here:  
<http://www.energynetworks.org/electricity/she/safety/safety-advice/overhead-power-lines-safety-campaign.html>

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**For more information, please contact Kindred:**

**Rebecca Peck 020 7010 0877 [rebecca.peck@kindredagency.com](mailto:rebecca.peck@kindredagency.com)**

**Sophie Lanning 020 7010 0843 [sophie.lanning@kindredagency.com](mailto:sophie.lanning@kindredagency.com)**

**Notes to editors:**

1. Figures are safety related incidents in Great Britain notified by electricity distribution network operators (DNOs) to the Health and Safety Executive as per the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR). Regulation 31 of ESQCR places a duty on those working on, or owning power network apparatus such as generators and distributors, meter operators and others to report deaths or injuries to members of the public, or near misses, fires or explosions which have occurred as a result of work on or near to electrical systems by others, or incidents

arising from leisure and other non-work activities in proximity to electrical plant, or from equipment failure. (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/esqcr.xlsx>)

2. Details of work-related fatalities in GB are published by the Health and Safety Executive, see: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/fatals.htm> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/fatalities/>
3. Energy Networks Association (ENA) is the voice of the networks representing the 'wires and pipes' transmission and distribution network operators for gas and electricity in the UK and Ireland.
4. In Great Britain, there are six electricity Distribution Network Operators (DNO) that are responsible for the electricity networks that deliver energy from the national transmission networks into people's homes and businesses 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Details of network operators are available at [www.energynetworks.org](http://www.energynetworks.org).
5. ENA call on the public to know their free emergency numbers – 105 was introduced as the number to call to report or get information about power cuts.
6. The following websites can be used as further reference points:
  - ENA Public Safety Leaflets:  
<http://www.energynetworks.org/electricity/she/safety/safety-advice/public-safety-leaflets.html>
  - Find your Electricity & Gas Network Operator:  
<http://www.energynetworks.org/info/faqs/who-is-my-network-operator.html>
  - HSE agricultural safety advice:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/index.htm>