

Stay safe as you enter farm fields: Electrical contact can happen in an instant

Know how to stay safe around power lines on the farm. Taller equipment and longer extensions can come dangerously close to power lines.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Farming equipment has become more massive and technologically advanced over time. While these welcome improvements help farmers cover more ground in less time, taller equipment and longer extensions can bring added challenges around power lines.



Cody Conrady on the family farm

As farmers prepare to enter the fields for planting, [Safe Electricity](#) urges everyone working in the agricultural field to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines, poles and other electrical equipment.

“

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Bailey Conrady

Cody Conrady's story

Before you think it could never happen to you, consider electrical accident survivor Cody Conrady's experience. He [shares what happened to him](#) in an effort to help increase power line awareness.

It was his next-to-last day as an assistant manager for an ag fertilizer company. The company was understaffed that day, and Cody jumped in the truck to get ahead of the sprayer. Once the sprayer was in position, he hopped out to fill the tank with fertilizer. What happened next changed everything, since he and his coworker inside the cab were unaware that the sprayer boom had either made contact or gotten too close to a power line.

7,400 volts of electricity traveled through the boom and electrified the equipment and ground where Cody was standing. Unfortunately, the unyielding stray voltage considered Cody's body as part of its electrical path to ground.

In the minutes and hours that followed, Cody was brought back to life, rushed to a local hospital and then transferred via medevac to a Level 1 trauma center. That was the starting point to a very long and arduous road to recovery that included many surgeries, rehabilitation and prosthetics fittings.

Hindsight is 20/20: Cody's advice to others

When working near power lines, "pay attention a little more. Keep an eye on your surroundings. Just take an extra second to look at things, to see how your situation is going to unfold," Conrady advises.

Now days, he drives by fields buzzing with activity during active farm seasons and wonders if others see what he sees — if they realize the potential dangers of getting too close to power lines.

His wife, Bailey, says this type of accident could happen to anyone. Unintended contact happened in an instant, but its impact lives on long after an accident. "We knew life wasn't going to be the same. We knew that the 'normal' before was not going to be the 'normal' after," Bailey admits.

Follow the 10-foot distance rule

To stay safe around overhead power lines, follow safe work practices at all times to help prevent serious and even deadly accidents. Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines.

This 10-foot rule applies not only to the area underneath the power line, but to the full 360 degrees around it. Not only can electricity change paths if direct contact is made, it can also happen when someone or something gets too close to a power line and the current jumps, also known as arcing.



Cody and Bailey Conrady and their dog, Dixie.

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Other precautions

In addition to the 10-foot rule, take these steps to help decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab because you could be electrocuted. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to deenergize the power.
- If it is not safe to stay in the cab due to fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump with both feet landing at the same time. Hop away with feet together as far as you can.
- If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from at least 50 feet away) to stay in the cab or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Call 9-1-1 and do not approach the scene.
- Have a daily meeting with staff to go over possible hazards. Map out and review routes where equipment will be moved and ensure it will clear power lines.
- Teach anyone working with or for you (including family members and seasonal employees) about power line awareness and proper clearance distance.
- When working around power lines, always use a spotter, who has a broader vantage point than the person in the cab.
- Visually inspect overhead lines, which may not meet height codes due to age or pole damage. If a wire is hanging low, never try to move it; instead, contact your electric utility for assistance.
- Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.

“Even though planting season is a busy time filled with stress and tight deadlines, take time for safety, including electrical safety,” says Erin Hollinshead, executive director of Safe Electricity. “It could save your life or the lives of others.” For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).

Safe Electricity is the award-winning, public awareness program of the Energy Education Council, a 501(c) 3 (non-profit organization) established in 1952 on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. With offices located in Springfield, Ill., Safe Electricity operates under the University of Illinois Extension and is led by the EEC Board of Directors. Since the Safe Electricity program was created in 2001, it has provided thousands of safety-minded resources to its more than 500 utility members from across the country to help save lives and reduce injuries.

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