

# Oregon's Overhead Line Safety Act

## *Facts You Should Know... When Working Near Overhead Power Lines.*

To protect those working near overhead power lines from accidental contact, the Oregon Legislature passed into law the High Voltage Overhead Line Safety Act.

The law provides that no work activities take place within 10 feet of a high voltage overhead power line until the following two requirements are met:

1. The responsible party must notify the utility operating the line of the intended work activity.
2. The responsible party and the utility must complete mutually satisfactory precautions for the activity.

## **Working Together**

As soon as you inform your local utility of your intended work activity, you're taking the first step to ensure your safety and the safety of your crew. When and where necessary, the following can then occur:

- 1) Coordination of work schedules.
- 2) Identification of temporary mechanical barriers to prevent contact with the lines.
- 3) Temporary de-energizing and grounding of lines.
- 4) Temporary raising or moving of lines.

## **Failure to Comply**

Any party working within 10 feet of an overhead line without notifying the proper utility and establishing required safety precautions, will be held directly responsible for all financial consequences of an electrical accident.

Failure to comply with this rule can carry a penalty of up to \$70,000 for each offense in addition to the cost of injuries and repairs.

For your reference, the new law is printed in full on the back of this sheet.

## **Contact Your Utility Immediately**

If you or your contractor are going to be working near overhead lines, immediately contact the local electric utility nearest your intended job site. If you don't know who operates the power lines in question, any utility will be able to help.

Make your work activities as safe as possible by meeting all requirements of this law.

## High Voltage Power Line Regulation

757.800 Definitions for ORS 757.800 and 757.805. As used in this section and 757.805, unless the context requires otherwise:

- (1) "Authorized person" means:
  - (a) An employee of a utility which produces, transmits or delivers electricity.
  - (b) An employee of a utility which provides and whose work relates to communication services or state, county or municipal agencies which have authorized circuit construction on or near the poles or structures of a utility.
  - (c) An employee or agent of an industrial plant whose work relates to the electric system of the industrial plant.
  - (d) An employee of a cable television or communication services company or an employee of a contractor of a cable television or communication services company if specifically authorized by the owners of the poles to make cable television or communication services attachments.
  - (e) An employee or agent of state, county or municipal agencies which have or whose work relates to overhead electric lines or circuit construction or conductors on poles or structures of any type.
- (2) "High voltage" means voltage in excess of 600 volts measured between conductors or between a conductor and the ground.
- (3) "Overhead line" means all bare or insulated electric conductors installed above ground.
- (4) "Person" or "business entity" means those parties who contract to perform any function or activity upon any land, building, highway or other premises.
- (5) "Utility" means any electric or communication utility described by ORS 757.005, any plant owned or operated by a municipality, any person furnishing community antenna television service to the public and any cooperative corporation or people's utility district engaged in furnishing electric or communication service to customers.
- (6) "Proximity" means within 10 feet or such greater distance as may be prescribed by rule adopted pursuant to ORS chapter 654. [1989 c.672 §2]

757.805 Accident prevention required for work near high voltage lines; effect of failure to comply; applicability; other remedies unaffected.

- (1) Any person or business entity responsible for performing any function, activity, work or operation in proximity to a high voltage overhead line shall guard effectively against accidents involving such high voltage overhead line, as required by rules adopted pursuant to ORS chapter 654.
- (2) If any violation of subsection (1) of this section or rules adopted pursuant to ORS chapter 654 results in, or is a contributing cause of, a physical or electrical accident involving any high voltage overhead line, the person or business entity violating subsection (1) of this section or rules adopted pursuant to ORS chapter 654 is liable to the utility operating the high voltage overhead lines for all damages to its facilities and all costs and expenses, including damages to any third persons, incurred by the utility as a result of the accident. However, any person or business entity that has given advance notice of the function, activity or work to the utility operating the high voltage overhead line, and has otherwise substantially complied with rules adopted pursuant to ORS chapter 654, shall only be liable for such damages in proportion to that person or business entity's comparative fault in causing or contributing to the accident.
- (3) This section and ORS 757.800 do not apply to:
  - (a) Construction, reconstruction, operation or maintenance by an authorized person of overhead electric or communication circuits or conductors and their supporting structures or electric generation, transmission or distribution systems or communication systems.
  - (b) Fire, police or other emergency service workers acting under authority of a state agency or other public body while engaged in emergency operations.
- (4) The provisions of this section and ORS 757.800 are not intended to displace any other remedies which may be available to the utility by statute or common law. [1989 c.672 §§3, 4, 5, 6]

**For assistance with occupational safety and health problems, help is available at no cost by calling:  
*Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division Consultative Services***

### ***Salem Central***

350 Winter St. NE, Room 430  
Salem, OR 97301-3882  
(503) 378-3272

### ***Portland***

1750 NW Naito Pkwy., Suite 12  
Portland, OR 97209-2533  
(503) 229-5910  
Consultation (503) 229-6193

### ***Salem***

DAS Building, 1st Floor  
1225 Ferry St. SE, U110  
Salem, OR 97301-4282  
(503) 378-3274  
Consultation (503) 373-7819

### ***Eugene***

1140 Willagillespie, Suite 42  
Eugene, OR 97401-2101  
(541) 686-7562  
Consultation (541) 686-7913

### ***Bend***

Red Oaks Square  
1230 NE Third St., Suite A-115  
Bend, OR 97701-4374  
(541) 388-6066  
Consultation (541) 388-6068

### ***Medford***

1840 Barnett Rd., Suite D  
Medford, OR 97504-8250  
(541) 776-6030  
Consultation (541) 776-6016

### ***Pendleton***

721 SE Third St., Suite 306  
Pendleton, OR 97801-3056  
(541) 276-9175  
Consultation (541) 276-2353

**This sheet provided by the efforts of Oregon OSHA, Oregon PUC, Associate General Contractors of America (AGC) and your electric utilities.**