
Talking Points

Downed Power Lines

Accidents, severe storms, and other disasters can cause power lines to come down. With one wrong move before, during, or after a disaster, a life can be lost. Know the right steps to take to keep you and your family safe:

- If you see downed power lines, or other damaged electrical equipment, notify the local electric utility as soon as possible because the lines could still be live.
- Just because power lines are damaged does not mean they are dead. Stay away, and instruct others to do the same.
- Power lines do not have to be arcing or sparking to be live and dangerous.
- Downed power lines, stray wires, and debris in contact with them all have the potential to deliver a fatal shock. Stay clear of fallen power lines and damaged areas that could hide a hazard. Be alert during clean-up efforts.
- Treat all power lines as if they are energized until there is certainty that power has been disconnected.
- If a power line has landed on the ground, there is the potential for the area nearby to be energized. Stay far away, and warn others to do the same.
- Do not attempt to drive over a downed power line.
- If you are driving and come along a downed power line, stay away and warn others to stay away. Contact emergency personal or your utility company to address the downed power line.
- If power lines should fall on your vehicle while you are driving, do not attempt to drive away or get out. Call for help, and stay inside until utility crews say it is safe to get out. The only exception would be if fire or other danger, like the smell of gasoline, is present. In that case, the proper action is to jump—not step—with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Jump clear. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the vehicle and ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.
- Any power line that is dead could become energized at any moment due to power restoration or backup generators.

The Energy Education Council is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety and energy efficiency. Established in 1952, the Council serves as a forum for diverse utility and energy organizations to collaborate on the mutually vital issues of efficiency and safety. Learn more at: