

Safety Share

Elevated Work Platforms



Exclusion / hard separation of plant and equipment from overhead power infrastructure

Following a recent incident interstate, in which a scissor lift basket was raised and contacted live overhead infrastructure, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport reminds all Principal Contractors and Subcontractors of their obligations to ensure that safe work practices are implemented for all works involving elevated work platforms, and to ensure consultation and communication is undertaken with all relevant workers regarding the risks and safe practices associated with the activities, including emergency management procedures.

Safety requirement considerations

Safety systems must consider the risks of contact with energised electric lines including the potential to result in death, electric shock or other injury caused directly or indirectly by electricity and to take into account the risk that an electric shock may occur without direct contact with overhead electric lines. A close approach to line conductors may allow a 'flashover' to occur. The risk of flashover increases as the line voltage increases.

Assessing the Risk

When assessing the risks, consider:

- the location, height, arrangement and visibility of overhead electric lines and supporting structures e.g. poles, towers and stay wires;
- the voltage of electric lines and exposed energised parts and whether they are insulated or bare;
- possible sway or sag of the electric lines;
- environmental conditions e.g. storm activity, heavy rain, hail and lightning;
- site conditions e.g. wind strength and direction, terrain, ground surface and vehicular traffic;
- type of plant and machinery required – working area, stability, dimensions and operating characteristics, minimum clearance distances and manoeuvrability;
- the type of work activities required and the frequency of work tasks;
- qualifications, competency, skill and experience of people doing the work;

- setting up and packing up processes and procedures; and
- safe work practices and procedures e.g. a safety observer and 'permit to work.'

Managing the Risk

Principal Contractors and Subcontractors must manage the risks associated with working in the vicinity of overhead electric lines and associated electrical equipment by considering items such as:

- identifying potential hazards;
- consulting workers and asset owners e.g. the Electricity Supply Authority or the person with management or control of the electric line or premises;
- ensuring safe approach distances and work zones are identified and communicated to plant operators;
- providing training and supervision to ensure worker competence in the use for the plant including the communication process between the operator, ground support workers, and the emergency response procedures;
- preparing, implementing and communicating emergency management processes;
- communicating work process requirements such as work permits, SWMS, Standing Operating Procedures, PPE requirements, incident reporting, change management procedures etc;
- operating in accordance with Department for Infrastructure and Transport Minimum Safety Expectations; and
- maintaining Work Zones - operators may find it difficult to see overhead electric lines or judge their height. Prior to starting work, determine the approach distances and work zones required to ensure worker safety.

Recommended supporting documentation

[Model Code of Practice: Elevating work platforms | Safe Work Australia](#) (December 2025)

[Elevating work platforms - Overview | Safe Work Australia](#)

[General guide for working in the vicinity of overhead and underground electric lines | Safe Work Australia](#)

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