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Stay safe on the land this grain harvest

As grain harvest begins across the cropping districts of NSW, Essential Energy is reminding machinery operators to remain vigilant when working near overhead powerlines and power poles.

General Manager Safety, HR and Environment, David Nardi, said harvest machinery should be kept at least three metres clear from the electricity network to ensure the safety of agricultural workers.

“We appreciate that harvest time can be hectic, however, it pays to check the location of powerlines and poles before operating or relocating machinery to minimise the risk of electrical incidents,” David said.

“Last season there were numerous incidents of machinery contact with the network resulting in significant costs to individuals, loss of production, damage to power infrastructure and inconvenience to the wider community due to loss of supply.”

Essential Energy recommends workers complete a pre-work safety assessment before harvesting. This may include a farm risk assessment to identify the location of potential electrical hazards, such as stay wires and power poles, and applying effective controls to work safely around these hazards.

“Use safety observers to guide machinery movements and always lower harvest machinery to the transport position before relocating,” David said.

Powerlines brought down by machinery can threaten the safety of the operator and the public while also causing an inconvenience to customers through unplanned power outages.

“It’s important to also monitor weather conditions during harvest time as powerlines can sag in the heat, sway in the wind and be hard to see at dawn and dusk,” David said.

Ground level markers serve as an extra reminder for machinery operators to ‘Look Up and Live’ when working near the electricity network.

Maps of Essential Energy’s overhead electricity network are available by calling 13 23 91 or visiting essentialenergy.com.au/overhead.

To download electrical safety fact sheets or to order safety stickers and an instructional safety DVD online, visit essentialenergy.com.au/agribusiness.

“If your machinery does contact the electricity network, stay in the cabin and call Essential Energy immediately on **13 20 80**,” David said. “Bystanders should always remain at least eight metres away and treat powerlines as if they are ‘live’.”

To report an incident involving the electricity network, call Essential Energy on **13 20 80** or **Triple-0 (000)** if the situation is life-threatening.

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Essential Energy is the operator of Australia’s largest electricity network spanning 95 per cent of New South Wales’ land mass. Owned by the New South Wales Government, Essential Energy also provides water and sewerage services to customers in far western New South Wales.