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Sugar cane harvesters urged to work safely

As the NSW sugar industry regroups following the Tropical Cyclone Debbie flood event and prepares to begin crushing, Essential Energy is reminding those canegrowers that are harvesting this season to stay safe.

General Manager Safety, HR and Environment, David Nardi, said proper planning before harvesting would help to ensure that farmers and workers are aware of the location of the overhead power network and potential electrical hazards.

“Risks can be minimised by completing hazard assessments for each work site and briefing machinery operators daily before works commence,” David said.

“Operators should know the height and reach of their machinery in both stowed and working positions to ensure a minimum of three metres’ safe distance from powerlines is maintained at all times.

“Assign a safety observer to guide machinery movements near powerlines, especially when tipping cane into mill bins or trucks.”

Essential Energy recommends operators monitor weather conditions closely and remain extra vigilant at dawn and dusk when visibility is reduced and at the end of a long day when concentration may wane.

“It only takes a small lapse in concentration for an incident to occur. Unfortunately, that can become a major safety risk to operators and bystanders and potentially cause a power outage that then inconveniences the local community,” David said.

“Let’s look up and live when near powerlines and make sure everyone stays safe this harvest season.”

Sugar cane harvest safety fact sheets, safety stickers and a practical instructional electrical safety DVD are available on Essential Energy’s website at: essentialenergy.com.au/agribusiness.

Maps of Essential Energy’s overhead electricity network can also be accessed online, while powerline markers can be ordered online and installed by Essential Energy at a reasonable cost.

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