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Cotton workers urged to pick safety during harvest

With cotton harvesting about to commence across NSW, Essential Energy is reminding growers to remain vigilant around electrical infrastructure.

“Our cotton industry is proactive about safety and understand the increased risks come harvest season,” said Essential Energy’s General Manager Safety, HR and Environment, David Nardi.

“However, with increased harvest activity and the pressures of tight deadlines it is important that growers and their workers don’t become complacent.

“This season, remember to ‘Look Up and Live’ and be aware that powerlines can sway in the wind and sag in hot temperatures, increasing the risk of machinery coming into contact with wires.

“It’s important to ensure all staff and contractors have had proper safety inductions and machinery operators know where electrical infrastructure is located on the property.”

To keep safe this cotton harvest:

- Undertake pre-work risk assessments for areas where harvest machinery will be operating;
- Brief workers (or ask your employer) about conditions at the beginning of each day;
- Know the minimum clearance distances when working near powerlines;
- Ensure machinery is fully lowered before re-locating or transporting near powerlines; and
- Use ground level signage to identify where powerlines and electrical infrastructure are located.

“Essential Energy can also install aerial markers on properties for a cost to improve powerline visibility for operators,” David said.

“To enquire about powerline markers, visit essentialenergy.com.au/overhead and fill out an online enquiry form.”

If machinery does contact powerlines, operators should remain in the vehicle and call Essential Energy immediately on **13 20 80** to disconnect supply. Bystanders should remain at least eight metres away from the powerlines and anything in contact with them.

“The most important thing this harvest season is for all workers to get home safely. When machinery contacts powerlines, there is a risk to the safety of the operators and bystanders, and it can result in inconvenient power outages for the local community,” added David.

For information about electricity and cotton farming, visit essentialenergy.com.au/agribusiness.

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