

Spring Planting Season Poses Risks Above, Around and Below

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that nearly one in 10 farmers will be electrocuted on the job. And although August is the riskiest time frame for electrocution with 35 percent of annual electrocutions occurring that month across all industries, spring planting season can also be treacherous.

Farmers, home gardeners and weekend do-it-yourselfers alike tend to hurry when the weather forecast predicts a changing weather pattern that could affect planting and projects. When rushing to complete a task, dangerous accidents are more likely to occur.

Whether you will be preparing your farm for the growing season, planting early crops for your home garden or tackling outside projects, Kansas electric cooperatives urge you to take your time to look up, around and know what lurks below.

Danger Overhead

The most common risk of farming-related electrocution is contact with overhead power lines when equipment

hits the lines. Portable grain augers, oversized wagons, large combines, irrigation pipe—any tall equipment—can accidentally come into contact with an overhead power line.

The home gardener and weekend DIYer is also at risk when using ladders, pruning tools, rakes and other tall equipment near overhead power lines

Take the time to look up and locate overhead power lines before beginning your work. Farmers should tie down cargo and secure equipment extensions to prevent contact with overhead lines. Plan ahead when moving heavy equipment so you know in advance where overhead power lines are located and plan a path around them. Gardeners and DIYer's should also take precaution before carrying ladders and any tall tools across the yard—know where overhead lines are located and safely maneuver your equipment around them

Danger Around

Barns and livestock houses can also bring electrocution injuries. These places can be dusty and moist, a

breeding ground for corrosion. Make sure electrical boxes, outlets and motors in these areas are waterproof, dustproof and explosion proof. Before doing any work, look for exposed underground power lines that can pose electrocution risk, as do defective wiring and improperly used extension cords in and around farm buildings.

The key is to always survey your surroundings before beginning work.

Danger Below

Millions of miles of buried utilities lurk below the earth providing the essential services of water, natural gas and electricity. Kansas One Call urges homeowners and businesses to call 811 before beginning even the smallest project that requires digging. The depths of utility lines vary and several could be located in the immediate area. By calling 811, you will avoid disrupting services to your home, business or neighborhood, harming yourself and others and potential fines and repair costs. **KCL**

Information compiled from Kansas One Call, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Safe Electricity.

ONCE UTILITY LINES HAVE BEEN MARKED BY CALLING KANSAS ONE CALL (811) AND YOU'RE READY TO DIG, FOLLOW THESE SAFE DIGGING TIPS

- ▶ Dig with care! The paint and flags placed by the utility company indicate the approximate location of their facilities, which may be anywhere in a 2 foot area on either side of the line of paint or flags.
- ▶ Use only rounded/blunt-edged tools. Never use axes, hand or powered posthole diggers, picks, mattocks, pry/probing bars or mechanized equipment, as these often results in damage.
- ▶ Keep the face of the shovel parallel with the utility line markings.
- ▶ Don't be aggressive with digging close to utility lines.
- ▶ If the utility line is visible, keep the face of the shovel parallel with the utility line and use all precautions when removing the soil from around the utility line.
- ▶ Don't pry against a utility line.
- ▶ Don't take for granted that a utility line will be at a certain depth.
- ▶ Don't assume a utility line that is uncovered will be the only one. There may be others close by.
- ▶ Don't attempt to move underground utility lines.