

(June 29, 2015) --- **FortisAlberta reminds farmers about power line safety**

Summer is a busy time on Alberta's farm. It's time to spray crops, move bins and many other high loads or pieces of equipment. FortisAlberta is asking farmers to remember to work safely around power lines. In 2014, 14 power line contacts involved air seeders and sprayers, a concerning trend. A farm fatality occurred earlier this year which is driving utilities to reach out to farmers, ranchers and anyone who operates agricultural equipment.

"Precision farming practices, which involve GPS devices are giving us a new cause for concern in addition to the growing height of farm equipment," says Dan Thayer, Manager, Health and Safety at FortisAlberta.

In 2014, there were a total of 227 contacts with FortisAlberta's overhead power lines, 41 of them involving agricultural equipment. While that's an average of 18 per cent of all contacts, the severity of the incidents is generally greater in the agricultural sector.

Each year, FortisAlberta reaches out to the agricultural community through tradeshow, advertising and personal visits. Since the 1950s, the size of farm equipment has doubled. Farmers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the power lines on or near their land. Compared to highways and public roads, power line clearances are lower in field access approaches, across fields and at yard entrances. Farmers are asked to take the following into consideration when planning their work and equipment layout.

- Store hay, grain bins and other equipment and vehicles away from overhead power lines.
- Never attempt to lift or measure a power line yourself. Contact FortisAlberta to determine the power line clearance heights on your land and consider where the contour of the land may reduce this distance.
- Know the heights of your vehicles including the added height of extendable or attached parts such as sprayer booms, cranes or augers and always lower equipment before moving.
- Never spray water hoses or irrigation pivots at power lines.
- When equipment like augers are parked and operating, maintain a distance of at least seven metres from the nearest overhead power line. If you have to get closer than seven metres, please contact your electricity company to verify the proper limits of approach.

What to do in the event of a power line contact:

- Stay calm. Your vehicle or equipment and the ground around you may be energized!
- Stay inside your cab and call for help unless there is a fire.
- You can try to break the vehicle free from the contact and get at least 10 metres away, but only if it doesn't cause further risk to yourself or others, or more serious damage to the power line.
- Keep others at least 10 metres away.

- If the vehicle is on fire, jump away with your feet together, then bunny hop or use small shuffles to get at least 10 metres away from the area. Open walking strides may enable current from energized ground to travel through your body.
- Never touch an energized object such as a vehicle when you are also touching the ground.

For more information including a video on power line safety for farmers, visit fortisalberta.com or contact 310-WIRE (9473). FortisAlberta serves 530,000 customers in more than 200 communities across Alberta including more than 60 per cent of Alberta's total electricity distribution network.

2014 Power Line Contacts with FortisAlberta's System:

Overhead Contacts	227
Underground Contacts	85
Total	312

Agricultural Equipment	# of Incidents
Air Seeder/Sprayer	14
Trackhoe	1
Tractor	9
Grain Auger	4
Silage Truck	0
Bale Hauler	2
Grain Bin Move	4
Grain truck	1
Cultivator	0
Combine	0
Others	6
Total	41

For more information, contact:

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