

Health & Safety

HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016

This issue will spotlight on encountering sudden emergencies...

Why are downed utility lines so dangerous?

Power lines may come down as a result of windstorms, ice build-up, and motor vehicle accidents. An excellent **short video** on the dangers of downed utility lines can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/FLVzvMTgGDY>. Eight helpful reminders for staying safe if you encounter downed utility lines are outlined below:



- 1. The protective cover on a power line is not insulation, only weather-proofing; it won't protect you against electrocution. Don't touch!**
- 2. You can't tell a downed line is "live" by looking at it.** An energized line may or may not spark, move, or look dangerous. Telephone or cable TV lines can become energized if touching damaged power lines. **Assume that all downed utility lines are energized power lines.**



- 3. Power can be restored unexpectedly to a downed line by the power company's automatic switching equipment without any warning!** Only fire/police/power company personnel can confirm that the system has been de-energized and that power will not automatically be restored; Wait for the power company to confirm that it is safe to approach the scene.

- 4. Objects in the path of electricity seeking the ground become energized too.** The electricity in a power line always seeks a path to the ground. This path might include a tree, a vehicle, a fence, or another person. Keeps kids and pets away from fallen lines. If you see that someone is in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, don't touch that person!

- 5. Once electricity reaches the ground, the ground itself becomes energized.** This can happen if a broken power line falls to the ground or onto a vehicle or tree. The electricity then flows through the ground over a wide area, spreading out like ripples in a pool of water. The voltage in the ground is very high at the point of electrical contact. Farther away, the voltage drops off. With power lines of up to 60 kilovolts, the voltage drops to zero at about 33 feet, or the length of a bus. However, if the ground is wet, it will be more than that. If you are near a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it. Move away by shuffling with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. **Do not go within 33 feet of a downed utility line or anything touching it.**

- 6. Trying to move a downed power line can cause the electricity to flow through you.** Attempting to move a downed line or anything in contact with it (including helium-filled balloons, kites or remote controlled aircraft) by using another object such as a broom or stick can be very dangerous; If you touch the energized line or object, the electricity can flow through your body. Even normally non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity and then electrocute you. **Keep away from any object that is in contact with a power line and call 9-1-1 instead.**

- 7. Water or moisture add risk.** Be careful not to step near water (e.g. puddles, drainage ditch) where a downed power line is located as electricity flows through water and can electrocute you.

- 8. Accidents to automobile drivers are preventable.** Do not drive over downed power lines. The safest place is to stay in your car and call 911. Roll down window and warn others to stay away from your vehicle. If you must leave your car because of fire or other danger, remove loose clothing, keep hands at side and JUMP clear of vehicle so that you don't touch the vehicle **and** the ground at the same time. Land with your feet together. Walk in a shuffle without picking your feet off the ground to 33 ft. away (approximately the length of a bus.)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Working safely may get old, but so do those who practice it."

-Author Unknown

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Why are downed utility lines so dangerous?

Mark Your Calendars: Upcoming Events

First on the scene of a serious crash? Here's what to do:

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SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY



✓ Mark Your Calendars:

SAVE THE DATE: Friday, October 14th, 2016, 12:20-1:20 PM in Hogness Auditorium Bloodborne Pathogens Training. Our host, Dr. Frank Roberts will deliver a lively review of infection control protocols, celebrity updates, and gruesome videos. It's an annual favorite and a requirement for workforce members with clinic exposure.

First on the scene of a serious crash? Here's what to do:

Trauma victims are most likely to recover when they receive surgery during the first hour after an accident. Your timely assistance can make a critical difference in saving lives and making the accident scene well managed until professional responders arrive at the scene.

Alert other drivers by slowing down and turning on your hazard warning lights. If the accident is hard to see due to the contours of the street, consider positioning any helpers up road and down road to wave down traffic which might not see the accident in time to stop.

Find a safe place to park on the shoulder out of traffic a minimum of 100 feet from the accident and ideally 600-700 feet or approximately the length of 6-7 professional basketball courts to allow plenty of room for emergency responders and to be clear of fires or possible explosion.

Take a moment to collect yourself by taking a few deep breaths. Witnessing a serious accident will likely cause a sudden rise in adrenaline and heart rate. You will be able to communicate more effectively with 911 dispatchers, help direct helpers, and assist victims if you are calm and less emotional.

Call 911. Never assume that someone else has already called 911. Tell dispatchers your location, number of people injured (a severely traumatized person will require an entire ambulance to themselves) and whether there is fire or downed power lines. Can you see gas, oil, antifreeze or other hazardous spills? Did any vehicles involved with the accident flee the scene (try to get license and description of the vehicle for police.) After giving information to dispatchers, wait for them to be the first to hang up. It's OK to call the 911 dispatcher back and provide an update so they can adjust their response plan if the situation at the accident scene changes. If you don't have a cell phone and must go to a nearby

house for help, rather than asking to come in and use their phone, say "There has been a serious accident. Please call 911."

Assist injured drivers and passengers. Assume there are injuries. Do not move an injured person. Try to stabilize the victim's head with clothing or your hands. Be alert for walking, but confused victims who may wander into traffic. Try to talk to scared and injured crash victims who may be feeling helpless and out of control. Let them know they're not alone and that help is on the way. Talk slowly in a calm, low voice. Say something like "You've been in an accident. It's important that you not move. I'm here with you, help is on the way and you are going to be ok." It's helpful to ask victims these three questions and document responses: "Who are you?" "Where are you?" and "What time of day is it?" Try not to verbalize your emotional reaction to blood, injuries, or talk about how bad things look.

Stabilize the vehicles (if you can). If able to safely do so, put vehicles in "park" and turn off the ignition to eliminate the risk of fire from leaking oil, fuel or coolant.

Stay at the accident scene until emergency personnel arrive. Police may need your account as a witness.

Take care of yourself following your experience. Witnessing blood, injuries and the chaos of a serious accident is traumatic to the body and can result in difficulty sleeping, eating and concentrating. Rest well, hydrate your body (but avoid alcohol), eat, and seek crisis counseling if the after-effects of the experience persist.



Washington state has a "Good Samaritan Law" which protects those who aid a victim during a medical emergency. However, know the limits of your ability to provide first aid or medical procedures you are trained to provide. If others have stopped to help, the person with the most amount of first aid, CPR or medical training should attend directly to the victims.



Following a crash, some airbags may not be deployed. If you need to enter a crashed vehicle, don't place yourself between any un-deployed airbag and injured or trapped person. Un-deployed airbags can deploy with force some minutes after a crash and could injure both the rescuer and injured or trapped person.



Consider every motorcycle accident a head, cervical and back injury. Keep head immobile and don't remove helmet unless victim is not breathing and CPR must be performed.

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