

## Emergency Procedure

### What to do if your boat comes into contact with an overhead line:

- Assume the line / wires are alive, even if they are not sparking.
- Remember that, even if they are dead, the wires can become alive again with no notice. This may happen automatically after a few seconds, or they may be made live remotely up to several hours later if SSEPD is not aware that the line has been damaged.
- If you can, use your mobile telephone to call the emergency services. Give them your location as accurately as you can. Tell them that there are electricity wires involved and ask them to inform SSEPD.
- If your boat is in contact with an electricity wire or within five metres of a damaged overhead wire then move away as quickly as you can, and stay away, until the emergency services or SSEPD arrive. If someone is on the boat, they **MUST** stay on the boat. Climbing down on to the ground could be fatal.
- Once a wire is on the ground you do not have to touch it to be killed. The current may travel a significant distance through the ground and even further if the wire has fallen on a fence or other metallic objects. Keep well clear.
- If you have to get out, then try and jump clear rather than stepping off the boat. Then move rapidly at least 10 metres away.
- The emergency services have been briefed on how to undertake rescues in proximity of damaged overhead lines. An SSEPD engineer will confirm when the power has been turned off and the rescue can proceed safely.
- If tangled in or touching wires, do not allow others to approach the boat until it is confirmed safe to do so by SSEPD.

## Emergency Contact

In an emergency, call the appropriate number below:

North of Scotland 0800 300 999

Central Southern England 08000 72 72 82

SSE Power Distribution Ltd  
Inveralmond House  
200 Dunkeld Road  
Perth PH1 3AQ

Web: [www.ssepd.co.uk](http://www.ssepd.co.uk)  
Registered in Scotland 213459

Stock Code 007609

# SAFETY INFORMATION FOR SAILORS

Dinghies Yachts Catamarans  
Sailboards Kiteboards RIBs

Keep safe from  
Electricity Overhead Lines



 Scottish and Southern  
Energy  
Power Distribution

## Introduction

There are electricity overhead power lines criss-crossing the countryside. Often unnoticed, they are essential to provide electricity to our cities, towns, villages and rural communities. The overhead lines carry voltages ranging from 230 volts (domestic voltage) up to 400,000 volts. Even domestic voltages can be fatal, and high voltage electricity can jump large gaps.

This leaflet is aimed at people who take part in boating or yachting activities and is designed to warn them of the dangers associated with boating in the vicinity of overhead electricity lines.

## Some general key points

- Electricity systems carry voltages up to 400,000 volts. Even 230 volts (domestic voltage) can be lethal.
- Never assume that any overhead wires are dead, even if they are broken or fallen to the ground.
- Remember that the power can be switched back on at any time, without warning.
- Touching electricity wires or objects / persons in contact with the wires can be fatal.
- Even the lowest voltage overhead lines can produce 10,000 times more current than is required to kill a person.
- Electricity can jump gaps.
- Masts, string, ropes, rigging and water can conduct electricity.
- Rubber boots will not protect you.
- Most overhead electricity wires are not insulated.

## Hazards

In rural areas, electricity is generally distributed on overhead lines supported by wood poles or steel towers (pylons). The electricity lines themselves are not normally insulated and any contact with them can lead to very serious injuries and death.

## What are the risks to you?

Overhead electricity lines are erected above a statutory minimum height that, in normal circumstances, places them safely out of reach. However, sailors are at an increased risk of contact with live lines because the metal masts and rigging of sailing boats may be higher than the lines. Anyone touching a boat whose mast or rigging is in contact with a line is at a very severe risk of being killed.

## How could this happen?

In recent years there have been several incidents where people have been injured or killed when their boats came into contact with live, high voltage overhead lines.

The majority of these incidents occurred while the boat was being rigged or moved on dry land. It is believed that the people involved simply did not notice the overhead lines.

These incidents have not just happened at boat clubs, people have also died or been seriously injured while rigging or moving boats in car parks, on their driveways and in the road outside their homes.

## Look out, and look up!

Before rigging or moving a boat with a tall mast, you should always look out, up and around you.

If there are any lines in the vicinity or on the route you are intending to use, stay well away from the lines. It is very difficult to judge the height of lines, so do not attempt to do so.

## Look for the Signs

- Electricity poles and pylons are usually fitted with yellow 'Danger of Death' notices. Also, if you are using a boat at a recognised or known boating venue, there should be warning signs and barriers, or goal posts, adjacent to any lines that may cross areas where the rigging or movement of boats is anticipated.
- Take note of any warning signs and stay well away from the marked area. Occasionally signs get knocked over or vandalised – so always check for overhead lines yourself.
- Don't forget - look up and around you.

## If in doubt – STOP!

- If there are lines near where you are rigging or moving a boat with a tall mast, stay away, do not dismiss the line as merely a telephone wire – this can only be done by trained people.
- Always assume that all overhead lines carry live electricity, and are dangerous.
- If you have any doubt – contact SSE Power Distribution (SSEPD) or the site owner, who, if they are not sure, should contact SSEPD themselves.