



Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority Warns of Extreme Hazard Due to Downed Powerlines

Downed powerlines can be deadly. Residents are warned to stay at least 11 metres/35 feet back from downed powerlines until utility workers have disconnected power and made the area safe.

MISSISSAUGA, ON/ Dec. 22, 2013/CNW/ - Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) is warning the public that severe and even fatal injuries can occur by touching or even being in close proximity to downed powerlines and electrical wires. The flow of electricity through the human body can burn, severely injure or kill.

Extreme weather has brought down powerlines in communities across Southern and Eastern Ontario. The widespread nature of the damage, along with weather conditions that will continue to affect the power system may lead to longer than normal response times for utility crews.

"It is extremely important that people stay well back and do not approach downed powerlines," said Scott Saint, Chief Public Safety Officer, ESA. "Always assume a downed powerline is live, even if it isn't sparking – the power could come back on at any time. That leaves no room for mistakes – never put yourself in electricity's path."

ESA reminds people to call 9-1-1 and their local utility if they see a downed powerline, and to follow these storm safety tips:

In the community:

- Downed powerlines may be live. Stay at least 35 feet or 11 meters away as electricity can travel through water and the ground around powerlines. Immediately report any downed wires to the local hydro company and call 911. Remain well back.
- Refrain from clearing snow, ice or storm debris until the power is disconnected or powerlines are repaired.
- If a powerline lands on your vehicle, remain in the vehicle until emergency responders arrive. Exiting a vehicle that has been contacted by a live powerline is extremely dangerous. Similarly, do not attempt to assist someone in a vehicle touched by powerlines.

Around your home:

- Heavy accumulation of snow and ice can bring trees and branches down onto powerlines causing blackouts and electrically charged hazards. Inspect the trees surrounding your property and call your local hydro company to trim branches away from overhead powerlines.
- Stay warm, cozy and safe. Do your research before buying portable heaters and electric blankets and ensure they bear a [recognized certification mark](#).
- Melting snow and ice can contribute to flooding. Beware if water gets into your home as electrical systems may be affected. If you suspect damage to your electrical system, contact a licensed electrical contractor to make the repair.

- When flood water rises above electrical outlets or power cords or is near the service panel, it could be energized. Contact your local hydro company to disconnect the power immediately.
- Portable generators, when used correctly, can provide security and comfort during power outages. Only use in dry, well ventilated areas and never connect portable generators to electrical appliances or wiring components that have been affected by flood water.

For more information on electrical safety when stormy weather hits, visit:

www.esasafe.com/powerlinesafety/your-community/winter-storm-safety.

About the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)

The Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) is an administrative authority acting on behalf of the Government of Ontario with specific responsibilities under the Electricity Act and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act. As part of its mandate, ESA is responsible for administering regulation in four key areas: the Ontario Electrical Safety Code; licensing of Electrical Contractors and Master Electricians; electrical distribution safety; and electrical product safety.

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