

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Electrical Safety – Responding to Electrical Emergencies

[Reference 1910 Subpart S / 1926 Subpart K]

Being prepared to respond to various electrical emergencies can be the difference between life and death. So today we will review how you should respond to a few types of electrical mishaps that could happen anywhere; at work, at home, or on the road.

- **Downed Overhead Power Lines** – First of all, keep your distance from downed electrical power lines! Do not attempt to walk or drive over downed power lines, nor should you ever try to grab them to remove them from atop your house, vehicles, tree limbs, or from across a roadway. Live electrical lines do not necessarily look “live”, meaning they don’t necessarily jump around while shooting out sparks. So again, keep your distance, and immediately call 911 to report the downed electrical lines so that trained responders can come and handle the situation. And if you are driving along and electrical lines happen to come down on your vehicle? Stay inside your vehicle if possible until trained responders arrive, because touching any metal part of your vehicle as your feet make contact with the ground while exiting could lead to your being electrocuted. Last but not least, be aware that any body of water that an energized line laying in it means that the body of water can be electrified. So do not wade out into the water to assist someone or to try and go around the electrical lines, as that could lead to electrocution.
- **Assisting an Electrocution Victim** – Your first impulse may be to run to the electrocution victim and touch them to assess their condition. But first, you should shout out for someone to call 911 and alert emergency responders so they can get headed that way. Then you need to take a careful look around to make sure the person who was electrocuted is not still making contact with any energized electrical line or other energized device. Look to see if they are grasping an electrical line in their hand, lying atop an electrical line, or if an electrical line is making contact with any part of their body. If so, try to locate the power supply and turn it off or disconnect it so the electricity is no longer flowing to and through the victim. If that is not possible, then try to find a long non-conductive object such as a fiberglass pole or a dry piece of wood, and try to separate the person from the electrical line.

Electrical shock can often interrupt a person’s regular heart rhythm. So check the victim to see if they are breathing and also check for a pulse. Then render CPR and/or rescue breathing as needed. Other common injuries associated with electrocutions include burns, as well as broken bones, bleeding, or bruises suffered from falling when electrocuted.

Can anyone think of other types of emergencies associated with electrocutions that we should discuss so we can be prepared ahead of time? Thank you for attending today’s OSHA training toolbox talk. Please be sure to sign your name on the training certification form so you will get credit for being here today.

