

First responder utility safety bulletin

Fall 2020



Responding effectively to car/pole accidents

Your toughest job?

No question. A first responder's toughest job is standing by when people right in front of you are at great risk of harm. Unfortunately, car/pole accidents frequently present you with exactly this scenario – driver and passengers trapped in a crumpled vehicle draped with one or more electric power lines, some sparking with live electricity, others appearing harmless. Tendrils of smoke drift out from under the hood. Quick! It's time to act! What should you do?



Spot the hazards at this accident scene. Most of us miss that dangling electric line to the left of the vehicle. Did you?

First, do nothing. Do not approach, touch or attempt to enter any vehicle that may be energized. Resist the temptation to try to extract passengers. You cannot help anyone if your first act on your way to the rescue gives you a serious – or fatal – electrical shock.

Protect yourself and bystanders

- **Assume all power lines are energized** and extremely dangerous, along with anything they are touching, including the ground nearby.
- **Have your dispatcher call National Grid immediately** for emergency assistance to de-energize the line.
- **Keep first responders and all equipment at least 30 feet away from downed distribution lines and at least 100 feet away from downed transmission lines.**
- **Evacuate the area.** Create a safe exclusion zone to keep bystanders at least one full span (the distance between two utility poles) away from the span containing the downed wires.
- **Survey the incident scene for objects and materials that could be energized.**

Look for both obvious and hidden hazards, including:

- Other utility wires, trees or poles touching the downed power lines
- A power line trapped by the vehicle, tree limb or other object (which will recoil back to where it is connected when released)
- Wire ends hidden by objects or foliage, or submerged in puddles
- Downed power lines in contact with metal objects, such as fences or ladders
- Power lines dangling above or near the scene

- **Expand your exclusion zone to keep bystanders far away from these hazards.**
- **Establish communication with vehicle occupants**, via cell phone or public address system, from a spot that's safe for you and where they can see and hear you easily.

Help occupants remain calm

- **Help occupants understand that they are safest from electric shock when they are inside the vehicle.** Assure them that National Grid is on the way and working to de-energize the power lines and make the scene safe.
- **Encourage occupants to drive the vehicle away from the power lines if they can do so safely.**
- **If passengers are injured or panicked, talk with them, keep them calm and alert,** and use the wait time to prepare medical assistance.

When danger is great

If vehicle occupants are in imminent danger from fire or other hazards, resist the temptation to approach the vehicle. From your safe but visible vantage point, explain these procedures to get everyone out alive – and demonstrate them to occupants before they attempt their escape:

- Instruct vehicle occupants to jump clear. They must NOT touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.
- Tell them to land with their feet together and shuffle away with small steps, keeping their feet close together and on the ground at all times.
- Explain that they should continue shuffling until they are a safe distance away.
- Emphasize that they must not run or take long steps.

When passengers are trapped or unconscious

If victims are injured, disabled or otherwise unable to safely exit the vehicle on their own, your incident commander will tell you how to proceed. No matter how difficult it may be, wait for instructions before taking action or you could become another victim.

Keep yourself, your team and the public safe this winter. Visit firstresponder.ngridsafety.com today to register and complete your utility safety training.

To report emergencies, call **911** and **National Grid** immediately.



Know what's below.
811 before you dig.

In case of gas emergencies:

Long Island and the Rockaways:
911 and 1-800-490-0045

Metro New York:
911 and 1-718-643-4050

Upstate New York:
911 and 1-800-892-2345

Massachusetts:
911 and 1-800-233-5325

Rhode Island:
911 and 1-800-640-1595

In case of electric emergencies:

Upstate New York:
911 and 1-800-867-5222

Massachusetts:
911 and 1-800-465-1212

Rhode Island:
911 and 1-800-465-1212

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS – PLEASE READ PRIOR TO USE.