

# Safety around Downed Power Lines

Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death. Electricity wants to move from a high voltage zone to a low voltage zone – and it could do that through your body.

- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. The ground around power lines – up to 10 to 35 feet away - may be energized.
- You should assume that all downed power lines are ENERGIZED and dangerous. You cannot tell whether a power line is energized just by looking at it. Even lines that are deenergized could become energized at any time from a remote location as part of the power restoration process. A live wire touching the ground can cause electricity to travel through the ground, radiating outward from the contact point. **STAY CLEAR!**
- The proper way to move away from the power line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.
- If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Call 911 for help.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or stick. Even non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, can conduct electricity if even slightly wet or otherwise contaminated.
- Be careful not to touch or step in water near where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed power lines.
- If your car comes in contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the car. Honk your horn or use your cell phone to summon help, but direct others to stay away from your car.
- If you must leave your car because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with both the car and the ground at the same time. Shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times, or hop away, with both feet landing on the ground at the same time. Do not run away from the vehicle as the electricity forms rings of different voltages. Running may cause your legs to "bridge" current from a higher ring to a lower voltage ring. This could result in a shock. Get a safe distance away.

Information for this came from: [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org) Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI)

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