



GM'S REPORT

THE BUNNY HOP THAT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

Staying safe after a vehicle vs utility pole collision



Don Englet
GENERAL MANAGER

Electrical Safety Foundation International designates May as National Electrical Safety Month. Every year, Firelands Electric Cooperative uses this time to educate our members and the community about electrical safety. Whether in the home, outdoors, or in the workplace, being informed can help reduce injuries, fatalities, and property damage related to electrical accidents.

Reducing the dangers associated with electricity is sometimes pretty obvious, such as never mixing

electricity and water or avoiding contact with power lines when using a ladder, shovel, or power tools. Other hazards are somewhat hidden, however. For instance, underground power lines are undetectable without the help of special equipment, which is why it is required by law to call 8-1-1 before you dig. Ground-mounted transformers (those green metal boxes found outside of some homes and businesses) also house a hidden danger. The high voltage equipment inside can be deadly, so steering clear of them is critical.

Another potentially hazardous situation, which is often overlooked, occurs when a vehicle collides with a utility pole and the power line comes in contact with the car or area surrounding it. Knowing the proper way to handle this situation could mean life or death.

According to the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety, 1,027 people died as the result of car accidents involving utility poles in 2022. While electricity was not the direct cause of all the fatalities, the number is significant enough to promote the importance of learning how to protect yourself and your family should you find yourself in a similar situation.

For starters, you need to remember that even a downed power line can still be energized or “live,” and it is impossible to tell by just looking at the wires. Unless your life is in danger by doing so (such as in the event of a fire), staying in the vehicle after a collision with a utility pole is the safest place to be. Stepping outside the car, or even opening the door, could create a dangerous connection allowing electricity to travel from a power line into your body.

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The first step you should take is to call 911. They will contact the appropriate utility company to safely deenergize the lines. Also, be sure to warn others — even first responders — to wait for crews to arrive for further instructions. If you absolutely must exit the vehicle, jump away without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Making contact with both creates an open path for electricity to travel, which can result in serious injury or even death.

The next step is where the “bunny hop” comes in. Once safely outside the vehicle, keep your feet together and hop until you are at least 40 feet from the vehicle, making sure that both feet land on the ground at the

same time. If hopping is not an option, shuffle your feet as you slowly move away, always maintaining contact between both feet and the ground. For a visual aid on these safety measures, check out the illustration from Purdue University on the next page.

Electricity provides us with a multitude of benefits. It's a vital part of our everyday lives that allows us to work and play. While electrical hazards can be alarming, taking the proper safety precautions can help avoid accidents and serious injury.

To learn about additional electrical safety precautions, visit our website at www.firelandsec.com/electric-safety.



Source: Fred Whitford, Purdue Pesticide Programs, Purdue University, PPP-151

Voltage reduces as it flows away from where live wires touch the ground — but that voltage can still cause injury, or even death. Stay safe by following the guidelines shown here, and stay at least 35 feet away from any point where wires make contact.