

DOWNED POWER LINE SAFETY TIPS

Fallen utility wires pose a potentially fatal threat

Downed power lines are not uncommon after a severe storm. But what should you do if you come across power lines on the ground or dangling from trees?

- Always, always, always assume the wires are energized and stay as far away as you can. Energized lines can charge the ground near the point of contact and could electrocute you. Power lines can carry up to 700,000 volts although most fatal accidents occur with wires transmitting only a few hundred volts
- Call 911. Let utility professionals and emergency personnel handle the situation
- Do not drive over downed power lines. Even if they're not energized, downed wires can get entangled with your vehicle and cause further damage
- Stay in your car. If a power line is touching your vehicle do not try to get out unless your vehicle is on fire, or you know for sure that the line is de-energized
- If you must evacuate your vehicle, jump far away and land with both feet together. To open the door, touch only the plastic door latch. Do not touch the frame of the vehicle, and do not touch the ground and your car at the same time; this can create a path for electricity to run from the vehicle through you to the ground
- Hop away to safety. After exiting the vehicle, don't run. Hop away keeping your feet together. (Shuffling your feet also works.) Separating your feet can create two contact points with the ground and can result in a shock if the ground is energized
- Rubber gloves or shoes will not protect you. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security because you are wearing rubber gloves or rubber-soled shoes. These items will not protect you from electrocution
- Do not let anyone else touch your vehicle. Ask them to call 911
- Do not try to rescue people who are in contact with a power line or whose vehicle is touching a power line. Do not try to rescue them because you risk becoming a victim yourself. Call 911 and, if possible, stay with them to provide encouragement and to warn others

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