

Change highlights: Overhead power lines and electrical utility workers – Parts 17 and 40 in the OHS Code

OHS information for work site parties

This bulletin introduces changes in Parts 17 and 40 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code.

IMPORTANT

This is an overview of updates effective March 31, 2023. Consult the law directly to make sure you comply with all applicable requirements.

KEY INFORMATION

- Part 17 addresses safe work procedures to prevent contact with overhead power lines. Part 40 contains provisions related to safety of electrical utility workers.
- The term “safe limit of approach distance” refers to a safe working distance from overhead power lines to prevent power line contacts.
- Requirements in Parts 17 and 40 have not changed. However, the provisions have been revised to clarify work site party responsibilities and be easier to understand.

Changes to Parts 17 and 40

Notification of work near overhead power lines

The requirement for employers to notify an overhead power line’s owner before work is done or equipment is operated near it remains unchanged. However, revised wording now clarifies that employers must notify the applicable “electric utility, rural electrification association, or industrial power producer.” Previous wording did not reflect the fact that not all power lines are owned by electrical utilities.

The definition of “rural electrification association” has been updated to clarify that it applies to Part 17 as well as Part 40.

Revised wording specifies that in addition to the employer, workers are also responsible for maintaining safe limit of approach distances listed in Schedule 4 of the OHS Code when working near an overhead power line. This change was made in alignment with the OHS Act’s stipulation that workers must take reasonable care to protect their health and safety.

For clarity, Part 17 now omits the word “energized” when describing overhead power lines and related legislative requirements that apply to them. All overhead power lines must be assumed to be energized, in accordance with the utility industry’s standards.

Updated standard reference

The reference to the Alberta Electrical and Communication Utility Code has been replaced. The new reference to CAN/ULC-S801-14, *Standard on Electric Utility Workplace Electrical Safety for Generation, Transmission, and Distribution* is referenced to align with the standard the electrical utility industry already follows.

Safe limit of approach distances exemption

The exemption to the provisions of Section 225 in Part 17 (relating to safe limit of approach distances) has been reworded to clarify that it applies to any utility worker who is working in accordance with the CAN/ULC-S801-14 standard (see above).

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton and surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx

Call the OHS Contact Centre if you have concerns that involve immediate danger to a person on a work site.

For more information

CSA Standards (free account required)

community.csagroup.org/login.jspa

OHS Code review

alberta.ca/ohs-code-review.aspx

Report a workplace incident to OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx

Website

alberta.ca/ohs

Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta King's Printer

alberta.ca/alberta-kings-printer.aspx

OHS

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx

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