

Overhead Power Lines: Plan the Whole Movement

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Why this matters

A delivery may fit on the ground while its raised bed, load or long material reaches a power line. Plan every position before movement.

Objective: Identify the power-line boundary and confirm how the entire movement stays protected.

Key hazards or failure points

Raised bodies; swinging loads; long stock; unknown voltage; assumed insulation; lost communication.

Practical controls

- Have the employer identify line hazards and arrange required protection with the utility and responsible specialists before positioning equipment.
- Plan the complete equipment, load and material movement. Establish the applicable clearance and encroachment controls for that equipment and activity.
- Brief operators, handlers and any required spotter. Agree communication and stop signals; keep unauthorized people outside the controlled area.

Verify It in the Field

The responsible planner identifies the governing rule, line information and selected protection. Record utility confirmation where deenergization is relied upon.

From a safe position, compare the planned movement envelope with established boundaries, including load ends, rigging and raised equipment.

The operator and assigned spotter confirm the prescribed positions, visibility and communication before movement; stop if required contact is lost.

Stop and reassess

Hold movement for unknown clearance, changed setup, missing protection or lost required communication. Keep clear of suspected electrical contact and summon emergency help.

Ask the crew

1. What reaches highest or farthest?
2. Who established today's clearance?
3. What happens when communication is lost?

Use this HOP tool — Pre-job briefing: Before equipment moves, have the operator describe the complete movement while handlers identify the farthest material and load positions. The responsible planner states the controlling boundary and protection. Agree the stop signal, then record any unresolved difference between the plan and the actual site.

Sources: OSHA 1926.416(a): circuit hazards; OSHA 1926.1408: crane power lines. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/overhead-power-lines-equipment-materials