

Media Release

Kaikohe – Monday, 24 August 2009



Safety guidelines for working around power lines

Local electricity generation and lines network company, Top Energy is reminding the community that working close to power lines, cables or other electrical equipment can be hazardous and expensive.

The company has developed a set of safety protocols designed to advise builders, digger operators, contractors and members of the public of their obligations under the *NZEC 34 Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances*, when working in close proximity to power lines or other electrical equipment. The protocols are detailed in Top Energy's Close Approach Consent Policy.

Earlier this month, the company ran ads on radio and in local newspapers reminding the community that **the safe working distance from power lines is a MINIMUM of 4 metres**. To assist with understanding the safety guidelines, Top Energy is also offering free site inspections and safety advice before work commences.

According to Top Energy's General Manager, Networks, Keith Gilby, if contractors or members of the public need to work, or operate machinery closer than the 4 metre safe distance, they are required by law to let Top Energy know and to make application for a Close Approach Consent Certificate. "A large amount of work close to power lines has been carried out by contractors or property owners in the past, without giving us prior warning. This can be extremely dangerous and, when things have gone wrong, very expensive for them too", he said.

Gilby says that as the safety issues have been publicised, more contractors and members of the public have been in contact with Top Energy about its Close Approach Consent Policy.

"When contractors or members of the public want to carry out work within 4 metres of power lines, we need to know the location and type of work they are planning, for safety and security of power supply reasons. They will also need to apply for a Close Approach Consent Certificate. We then visit them on site in advance of the work to assess the risks.

We then offer advice for managing any potential dangers to themselves or others, as well as reducing the potential for unplanned outages on our network. For example, if a contractor wanted to excavate within 5 metres of a power pole, depending of the depth of the excavations required, we may need to put temporary pole supports in place, to prevent the pole from collapsing. In a situation like that, our free site inspection could identify these dangers immediately and prevent potentially serious and costly consequences”, Gilby said.

Top Energy has included details of its Close Approach Consent Policy and how the process works on its web site. If you'd like more information about staying safe whilst working in close proximity to power lines, poles and other Top Energy electrical equipment, or to apply for a Close Approach Consent, please visit www.topenergy.co.nz and click on the '4M' icon. END.

Contact: Top Energy Chief Executive, Russell Shaw. Ph: 0-9 401 5622.