



**SAFE WORKING GUIDE:  
ALPINE ENERGY NETWORK**



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# Working safely

At Alpine Energy, a strong safety culture is our number one priority.

We're committed to keeping you, our people and communities safe. Our success is measured by ensuring everyone goes home safely to what they love every day.

We own and operate the electricity distribution network in South Canterbury, from the Rangitata to the Waitaki Rivers, and from the coast to Aoraki Mount Cook.

We are committed to providing a safe, reliable electricity network and protecting the people who work around it. This guide explains how to work safely near our network, the legal requirements involved, and what to do if you come across our assets while working.

The safety of you, your co-workers, and the public is everyone's responsibility. Before you dig, excavate, or work near any overhead lines, please take time to read this guide carefully - and make safety your first step.

## Alpine Energy electricity network



# Your legal requirements

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, all PCBUs (persons conducting a business or undertaking) have a duty of care to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

Anyone planning, supervising, or carrying out work near Alpine Energy's network must follow WorkSafe's Excavation Safety Good Practice Guidelines and the Guide for Safety with Underground Services.

These documents set out minimum safe work practices for working near underground and overhead utilities, including electricity and communications.

Key legislation and codes include:

- Electricity Act 1992
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- NZECP 34:2001 Electrical Safe Distances
- Electricity Safety Regulations 2012

All PCBUs must also notify WorkSafe of any serious incidents or injuries.

If Alpine Energy's network is damaged, we may refer the matter to WorkSafe for investigation and recover the cost of repairs and associated losses.

# The risk of working near our network

Electricity is dangerous and can kill or cause severe injury if you make contact with cables or lines.

If you strike or touch an underground cable or overhead line, there is a risk of:

- Fatal electrocution or serious burns
- Flashover or explosion
- Fire or equipment damage
- Power loss to customers, hospitals, and critical services

Electricity can travel through the ground and through nearby objects, so you don't have to touch a live cable to be injured.

Always treat cables and overhead lines as live unless we confirm otherwise.

# Check before you dig

## Step 1: Obtain plans and consents

Before starting any excavation work, visit [www.beforeudig.co.nz](http://www.beforeudig.co.nz) to request plans at least two working days before you begin.

You'll receive free plans showing the approximate location of underground electricity cables.

Plans are valid for 28 days - after that, you must request new ones.

Because ground levels and boundaries can change, you must confirm the actual cable location on site before digging.

For follow-up queries, contact us on 0800 66 11 77.

## Step 2: Review plans and mark out all services

Use the plans as a guide to identify whether you have any Alpine Energy assets in your work area.

If your work is within **10 metres** of our cables, you should:

- Use an underground cable locator to confirm and mark out the cables' position, or
- Use the measurements on your plans to estimate location where a locator can't be used.

If cables are shown close to your work area, contact us for advice or to arrange a *Close Approach Consent*.

## Step 3: Pothole to expose services

Once marked, carefully hand dig or hydrovac (maximum 1500 psi) to physically expose and confirm the location of all cables before using machinery.

Use your plans to confirm all the cables have been found and identified.

Do not rely solely on warning tape - not all services have it, and it may not be directly above the cable.

You must physically see the cable before using any mechanical equipment. Hand-clearing or hydrovacating are to be used close to buried cables - do not excavate close to a cable using a machine.

## Tips to continue working safely

- Always assume cables are live until we confirm otherwise.
- Use a spotter or safety observer when working near marked services or operating machinery.
- Do not expose cables beyond two metres without our approval.
- Backfill carefully using clean fill or sand around cables - no sharp materials.
- Replace any removed warning tape or cover boards directly over the cable.
- Overhead lines does not mean there aren't underground cables too.
- Cable depths vary – never assume depth or location.
- Avoid using excavator buckets with teeth near underground assets.
- Do not move any exposed cable from the position you find it.
- Report all damage to underground cables immediately to Alpine Energy on 0800 66 11 77.

All repairs must be carried out by qualified Alpine Energy-authorized personnel only.

## Excavating near power poles

- **Do not dig within 5 metres** of one of Alpine Energy's power poles or ground stays without a *Permit to dig* as this could cause the power pole to collapse.
- We will provide guidance and on-site advice where necessary.



Scan this QR code to complete our Permit to Dig form.

# Working near overhead lines

When working near overhead lines or power poles, always:

- Maintain a minimum **4 metre clearance** from any overhead power lines when operating machinery or moving equipment.
- Obtain a *Close Approach Consent* if you need to work closer than this.

All work must comply with the New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice (NZECP 34:2001).

## Close approach consents

You must obtain a *Close Approach Consent* from Alpine Energy for:

- Any work within **4 metres** of overhead lines
- Work above overhead lines or within NZECP 34 Table 2 distances

*Close Approach Consents* are **valid only for the approved work type, dates, and location** and must be obtained before any work commences.



Scan this QR code to complete our **Close Approach Consent form**.

# Working near tagged poles

## Safety risk

Red and Yellow tags on Alpine Energy network poles are critical visual warnings indicating structural defects and safety risks.

These tags signify that a pole has failed inspection and is a candidate for replacement within a set timeframe, with Red representing a higher, more immediate risk than Yellow.

Such poles may not be structurally reliable and workers must avoid:

- Digging/excavating nearby
- Leaning ladders or temporary structures against them
- Using the pole as a support or anchor point.

## Working near tagged poles

Visually inspect poles within the area covered under your Close Approach Application.

If a Red or Yellow tagged pole is present, please ensure:

- All crew members are briefed on tagged-pole hazards prior to starting work.
- Exclusion zones are maintained around any tagged poles.
- The Network owner is contacted if the condition of a pole is unclear or unsafe



## Emergency precautions

If a tagged pole appears to be failing (leaning, cracking, breaking) or if lines are down:

- Treat all wires as live and keep at least 10 metres clear
- Evacuate the area immediately
- Call 111 for life-threatening situations
- Contact your local lines company's emergency line
- Prevent others entering the hazard zone

# Building near overhead lines

AEL does not permit any structures to be built beneath power lines, regardless of whether they meet the minimum clearance requirements under NZECP 34. This policy reflects our commitment to go beyond legislative compliance and actively improve public safety.

When building or extending any structure (including garages, sheds or fences), ensure safe clearance from overhead lines.

Minimum distances between buildings and power lines are set in NZECP 34:2001 and depend on line voltage.

To confirm the voltage and heights of nearby lines, call us on 0800 66 11 77.

Voltage	Minimum distance beside lines
Up to 1kV	3.5 metres
1-11kV	5.0 metres
11-33kV	8.5 metres
33-110kV	9.5 metres

If your proposed work doesn't comply with these distances, you'll need engineering advice to confirm it meets Table 3 of NZECP 34:2001.

# Temporary electricity safety disconnect

If you're carrying out work near the service line that connects a property to the street (e.g. roof repairs, painting, water-blasting, or scaffolding), contact us to temporarily disconnect the power.

This service is free for private properties.

Allow at least five working days to process the request.

Call 0800 66 11 77 to arrange.

# Removal or demolition of a building

If you're planning to remove or demolish a building, you must arrange for any electricity connections to be safely disconnected before work begins. This prevents the risk of electric shock, fire, or damage to our network.

You can request a permanent decommission by contacting us on 0800 66 11 77.

Please allow up to 20 working days for processing and scheduling.

If you're unsure whether a property is still connected, get in touch before starting any work.

Never assume the power has already been disconnected.

# Travelling with high loads

If you plan to move a large or tall structure (such as a house or boat) **exceeding 4.3 metres in height**, you must apply for a High Load Consent.

Contact us on 0800 66 11 77 to confirm clearance heights and arrange a consent before moving the load.

Allow at least two working days for standard applications.

The table below summarises all possible scenarios when travelling with high loads:

Height (m)	Conditions
<b>Over 5.0 - 6.5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Along with the above conditions, you will also need a permit from the Over-dimension Permit Issuing Agency (OPIA). 0800 OVERSIZE (0800 683 774).</li><li>• Allow at least 5 working days to process the consent</li></ul>
<b>Over 6.5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Along with the above conditions you will also need written approval from the Transport Agency.</li><li>• Allow at least 25 working days to process the consent depending on requirements.</li></ul>

\*If a disconnection is necessary, a 15-day notice period is required so that we can inform customers who will be affected.

# What to do in an emergency

If you hit an electricity cable or overhead line:

1. Treat it as live – **stay at least 10 metres away.**
2. If in a machine, stay inside unless there is immediate danger (e.g. fire).
3. If you must exit, jump well clear, landing with both feet together and do not touch the machine and ground at the same time.
4. Keep others away and call us immediately on 0800 66 11 77.
5. If someone has received an electric shock, do not touch them until you are certain the source of electricity has been removed.
6. Call 111 for emergency services.

## Quick reference phone numbers

For plans requests visit [www.beforeudig.co.nz](http://www.beforeudig.co.nz) or call 0800 248 344

For *Close Approach Consents*, Application to dig permits and safety advice call 0800 66 11 77

For Alpine Energy Electricity General Enquires or Emergencies call 0800 66 11 77



For more information scan this QR code to go to our “Working near powerlines” page.



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[www.alpineenergy.co.nz](http://www.alpineenergy.co.nz)