

Plan Controlled Burning to Help Mitigate Risks

BY JASON KLENKLEN



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My team and I work every day to enhance safety and improve reliability on more than 4,400 miles of transmission lines that traverse Kansas. These high-voltage power lines connect utilities and power generators on a national scale to efficiently provide electricity to the communities of Kansas. In recent years, investment in the Kansas transmission system has increased, driven by a need to update the infrastructure, support economic development and provide capacity for the state's growing wind energy industry.

Transmission lines are like the Interstate highways of the power grid. Like the Interstate, the transmission system has certain precautions that are important for safety. Activities utilities perform to keep lines safe and reliable include performing inspections and using specialized equipment to identify problems before they cause an outage.

Transmission line safety, agriculture and controlled burning

My team and I can't control everything that might impact a power line. For some things, we need the help of others. A dangerous situation can occur when burning takes place too close to a power line. Implementing a plan for controlled burns and mitigating potential risks from accidental blazes is critical to YOUR safety. When power lines traverse fields, or brush piles are too close to a power line, caution must be exercised. In addition to damaging poles, wires and other components; smoke, soot and by-products from fires can create major hazards when in proximity to overhead power lines.

Here are some things to be aware of when working around overhead power lines:

- ▶ Look up! Be mindful of overhead power lines before performing any activities.
- ▶ We recommend keeping personnel and equipment at least 100 feet away from overhead lines when burning.
- ▶ Fire can severely damage wires, poles and other items, potentially causing equipment failures and service interruptions.
- ▶ Downed powerlines should always be treated

like they are energized and reported immediately by calling 9-1-1.

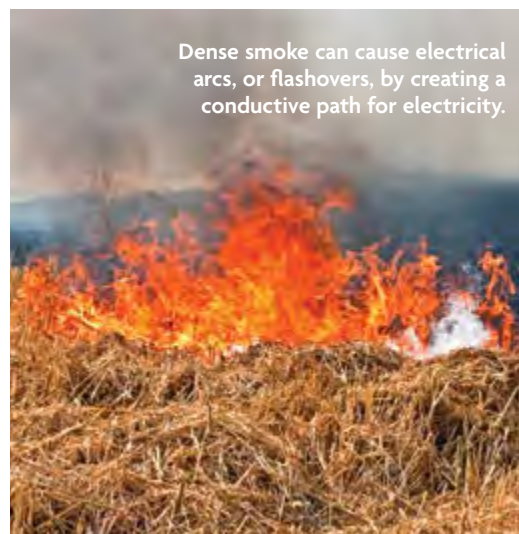
- ▶ Dense smoke can cause electrical arcs, or flashovers by creating a conductive path for electricity.
- ▶ Water and other chemicals used to extinguish fires should never be directed toward wires or poles.

Precautions can be taken to minimize the risks related to burning near power lines. First, develop and use a prescribed burn plan, noting line locations and adjusting for wind conditions. Additionally, an effective means to prevent any problems year round is to maintain a buffer zone of at least 10 feet around any pole or structure. A few ways to accomplish this include:

- ▶ Mowing and removing dead vegetation, brush and other fuel sources from the area.
- ▶ Working the ground (i.e. tilling), or using a fire resistant ground cover.
- ▶ Use backburn/backfire techniques to create a firebreak away from power lines, poles and other components.

As the days grow longer and the burning season begins, please take time for these important safety precautions. Your health and safety are worth it. **KCL**

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