

Public Safety in Focus: Public Safety Working Group (PSWG) Update



Jacques Brown

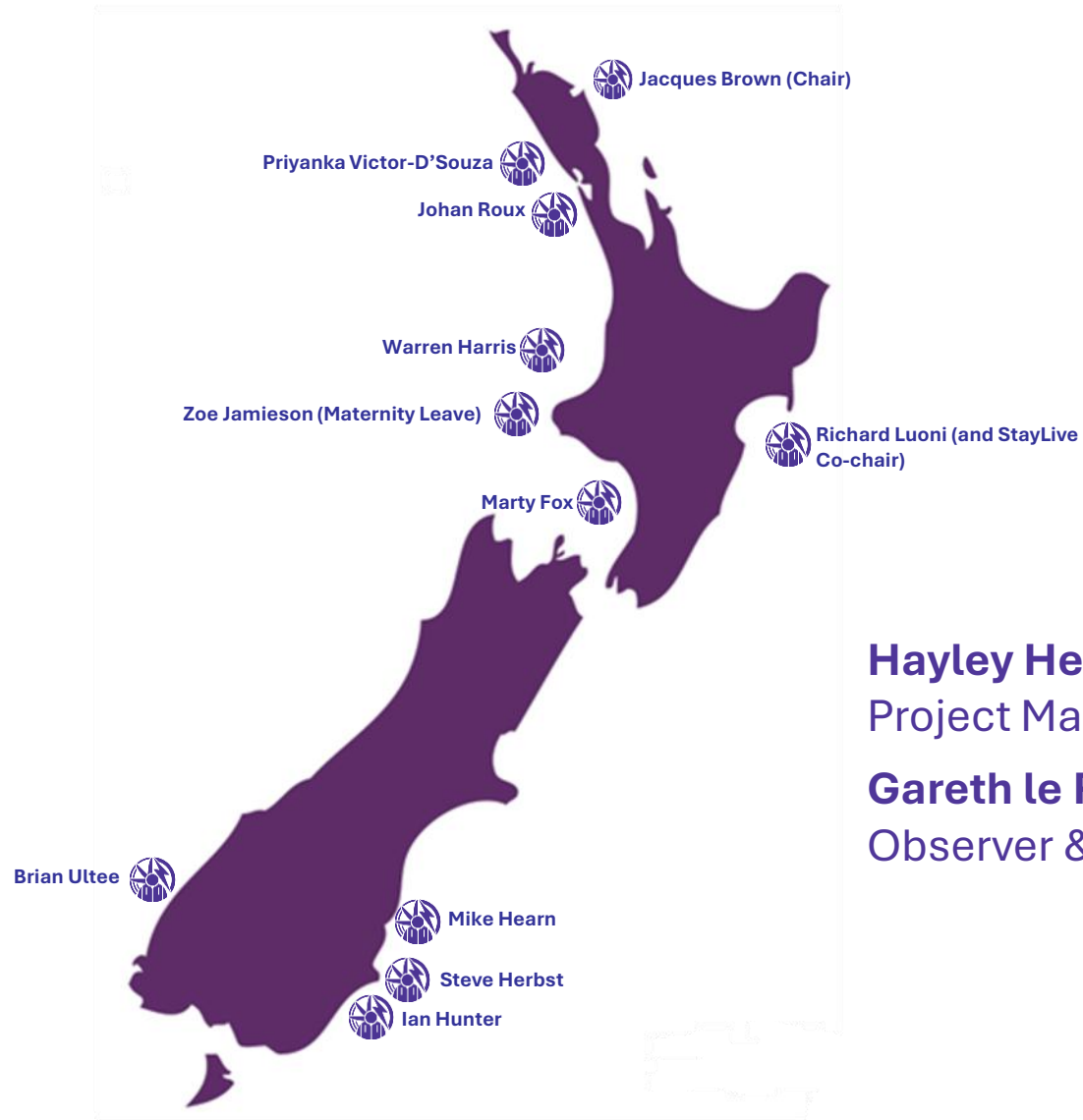
**Public Safety Working
Group (PSWG) Chair**

**Technical Safety Engineer
Top Energy, Kerikeri**

11 August 2026



Public Safety Working Group: Members



Hayley Head (EEA) - Group Advisor & Project Manager

Gareth le Roux (WorkSafe) - Observer & link to Energy Safety



Public Safety Working Group: Purpose

“A big issue for our sector this year has been how we collectively respond to the Minister of Energy’s urgent call for more standardisation and efficiency.” – Nicki Sutherland, Your July 2026 EEA updates

- The Public Safety Working Group (PSWG) was established in 2014 by the Electricity Networks Association (ENA) and the Electricity Engineers’ Association (EEA).
- The PSWG is a pan industry, innovative, inclusive, and trusted group that works with the electricity supply industry and other key stakeholders to coordinate, collaborate and develop consensus outcomes to solve public safety issues, share knowledge and promote standardisation.
- “Public” includes ‘third party contractors’ as well as members of the general public. It is also defined as ‘anyone who is not an employee or an authorised contractor working on behalf of the asset owner’.



PSWG: Apr 2026 – Mar 2027 Work Programme

The PSWG has a very ambitious work programme to deliver. We do this through:

- Alignment with the EEA Strategy and clear, focused goals.
- A hybrid of regular in person and online meetings.
- Utilising sub-groups drawing on peoples strengths & interests to action workstreams.



PSWG: Work Programme Workstreams

- 1. Technical Best Practice:** New Publications & Reviewing/Updating of existing publications
- 2. Connecting the Sector:** Support and engage the sector, EEA H&S Workshop, Energy Safety, EDI H&S Forum
- 3. Workforce Capability:** Public Safety Website, External Industry Engagement, Guide promotion and implementation & EEA Public Safety Award



PSWG: Publication of PSMS Performance Monitoring Guide



The PSWG has drafted a **Public Safety Management System Performance Monitoring Guide** to support a more consistent and systematic approach to monitoring PSMS performance across the electricity industry.

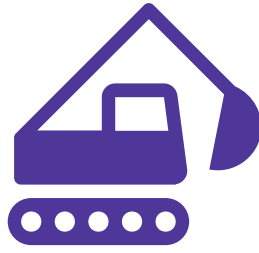
The guide is intended to assist asset owners and operators to:

- Verify that public safety risks are being effectively identified, controlled and managed;
- Provide assurance that the PSMS is implemented and operating as intended;
- Monitor whether risks remain tolerable and as low as reasonably practicable;
- Identify trends, emerging risks and opportunities for improvement; and
- Support clear reporting to operational teams, executives, boards and regulators.

The guide covers audit types, key performance indicators, incident monitoring, risk and control review, annual reviews and reporting and escalation. It also includes practical examples for internal audits, site-based self-assessments and annual PSMS reviews.



PSWG: Publication of a Close Approach Consents Guide



The perception amongst external stakeholders is that there appears to be no industry consistent and efficient approach to the Close Approach Consents process.

Hence the PSWG is busy drafting a **Close Approach Consents Guide** with the aim to support a more consistent approach across the electricity industry for applying, assessing, issuing and managing written consent for work or activities near electricity assets.

It is intended to:

- Clarify when written consent is required;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of the applicant, consent recipient and asset owner;
- Support the selection and implementation of appropriate controls;
- Promote consistent communication, documentation and worksite assurance; and
- Help protect workers, the public, property and electricity network assets from electrical risk.



PSWG: Public Safety Website



Same as with the Close Approach Consents process, the public and external stakeholders indicates that they find it **challenging to locate clear and consistent public safety information across the industry.**

The approach we've taken:

- We've identified that we need good public safety information that is consistent and easy to access, so we decided we would focus on creating an engaging and informative public safety website.
- A website domain called 'Safer Electricity' was registered.
- At this stage it's hosted on the EEA website while we work on it, but the idea is that it will become a standalone website.
- We were aiming to launch at this H&S Workshop, but soon realized that, like many good things, it takes a bit of time.



Safer Electricity: Homepage

SAFETY FIRST, ALWAYS

Stay safe around electricity

Simple, practical guidance to help you recognise electrical hazards and take the right steps — at home, at work, on farms, on the road, and outdoors.

[Find your local lines company](#)

EMERGENCY
Call 111

If there's immediate danger — a fire, electric shock, downed lines, or a serious incident — stay well clear and call emergency services.

 Digging or excavation

 Trees near power lines

 Storms and emergencies

 Medical dependence

START HERE

Choose the situation that fits you

[Find your local lines company →](#)


At home
Practical safety advice for DIY, digging, trees, children, EVs, and home emergencies.
[View guidance >](#)


At work
Guidance for contractors, builders, scaffolders, and others working near electricity assets.
[View guidance >](#)


On the farm
Stay safe around poles, stay wires, irrigation, machinery, livestock, and underground services.
[View guidance >](#)


Driving
What to know about poles, downed lines, high loads, EVs, and what to do after a vehicle incident.
[View guidance >](#)


Enjoying the outdoors
Advice for waterways, boating, fishing, drones, kites, camping, and staying safe near overhead lines.
[View guidance >](#)

COMMON HAZARDS

Popular safety topics

Quick links to the advice people are most likely to need before starting work, responding to an emergency, or planning an outdoor activity.

 Digging or excavation >	 Trees near power lines >
 Storms and emergencies >	 Medical dependence >
 Kids and recreation >	 Waterways and generation >



Safer Electricity: Find your local lines company



Electricity Engineers'
Association

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Digging or excavation



Trees near power lines



Storms and emergencies



Medical dependence



Safer Electricity: Choose your situation

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At home

Practical safety advice for DIY, digging, trees, children, EVs, and home emergencies.

[View guidance >](#)



At work

Guidance for contractors, builders, scaffolders, and others working near electricity assets.

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On the farm

Stay safe around poles, stay wires, irrigation, machinery, livestock, and underground services.

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What to know about poles, downed lines, high loads, EVs, and what to do after a vehicle incident.

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Digging or excavation



Trees near power lines



Storms and emergencies



Medical dependence



Kids and recreation



Waterways and generation



Your Situation: At Home

At home

← Safer Electricity

Electricity is part of everyday life at home — but ladders, renovations, digging, trees, EVs, and medical equipment can all bring it closer than you'd expect. This section covers the most common situations homeowners run into, with practical steps to stay safe.

- [Working at height](#) – ladders, roofs, and gutters near overhead lines
- [Building and renovating](#) – planning safely around power lines and underground cables
- [Scaffolding](#) – keeping scaffold work clear of live lines
- [Digging and excavation](#) – checking for underground cables before you dig
- [Trees close to powerlines](#) – planting, trimming, and reporting hazards
- [Electric vehicles](#) – charging safely at home and on the road
- [Medical dependence](#) – planning ahead if you rely on electricity for medical equipment
- [Portable generators](#) – using generators safely during power outages

If you see a downed line or damaged equipment, stay well back and call 111. For anything specific to your property or network, [find your local lines company](#).



Your Situation: At Home – Working at Height

Working at height

← Safer Electricity

Working at height around your home can be risky, especially near power lines and electrical equipment. Ladders, scaffolding, and long tools can easily come too close to overhead lines without you realising.

Work within four metres of overhead lines must comply with the [New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances \(NZECP 34\)](#), which sets minimum safe distances from power lines.

Always look up before you start and keep well clear of power lines. Electricity can arc, meaning you don't need to touch a line to be seriously injured.

Stay safe

- Look up and identify any overhead lines before starting work
- Keep ladders, tools, and materials well clear of power lines
- Maintain safe distances at all times
- Use non-conductive equipment where possible
- Stop work and seek advice if you are unsure

For more information about working safely at height, including ladders, scaffolding, roofs, and fall protection, visit [WorkSafe – Working at height in New Zealand](#).

Safety disconnections

Your local lines company may also be able to help by temporarily disconnecting the power (or covering the lines) while high-risk work is carried out. This is commonly used for roofing, scaffolding, painting, water blasting, and other work close to service lines. [Contact your local lines company](#) before starting work to discuss safe options.



Your Situation: At Work

At work

← Safer Electricity

Workplaces bring their own risks around electricity — from mobile plant and machinery to scaffolding, excavation, and building work near live assets. This section covers the situations most likely to affect contractors and workers on site.

- [Working at height](#) – ladders, roofs, and fall protection near overhead lines
- [Digging and excavation](#) – checking for underground cables before you dig
- [Trees close to powerlines](#) – safe work near vegetation and overhead lines
- [Building and renovating](#) – planning safely around power lines and underground cables
- [Scaffolding](#) – keeping scaffold work clear of live lines
- [Mobile plant](#) – excavators, cranes, forklifts, and other machinery near lines

If you see a downed line or damaged equipment, stay well back and call 111. For anything specific to your worksite or network, [find your local lines company](#).



Your Situation: On the Farm and Orchards

On the farm and orchards

[← Safer Electricity](#)

Farms and orchards bring extra challenges — machinery, livestock, and irrigation all operate close to power lines and electrical equipment. This section covers the situations most relevant to farm and orchard properties.

- [Working at height](#) – ladders, roofs, and machinery near overhead lines
- [Digging and excavation](#) – checking for underground cables before you dig
- [Trees close to powerlines](#) – planting, trimming, and reporting hazards
- [Livestock](#) – keeping animals safe around electrical equipment
- [Property](#) – electrical assets on farms and lifestyle blocks
- [Farm machinery](#) – safe distances for tractors, irrigators, and other equipment

If you see a downed line or damaged equipment, stay well back and call 111. For anything specific to your property or network, [find your local lines company](#).



Your Situation: Driving

On the road

← [Safer Electricity](#)

Roads and roadsides bring their own electrical hazards — from transporting oversized loads to crashes involving power poles. This section covers the situations most relevant to drivers and transport operators.

- [High loads](#) – transporting oversized loads safely near overhead lines
- [Vehicle hits a power pole](#) – what to do after a crash involving electrical equipment
- [Mobile plant](#) – excavators, cranes, forklifts, and other machinery near lines
- [Electric vehicles](#) – charging safely at home and on the road

If you see a downed line or damaged equipment, stay well back and call 111. For anything specific to your situation or network, [find your local lines company](#).



Your Situation: Enjoying the Outdoors

Enjoying the outdoors

← [Safer Electricity](#)

Electricity networks and equipment can be found in many outdoor and recreational areas, including parks, rivers, lakes, farms, beaches, and campgrounds.

Power lines, substations, hydro dams, and other electrical equipment can remain dangerous even when they appear inactive.

Always stay alert and keep well clear of electrical equipment and overhead power lines.

Stay safe around overhead power lines

Take extra care when:

- Flying kites
- Using drones
- Fishing
- Boating
- Carrying long equipment
- Setting up tents, marquees, or shade structures

Stay safe

- Never fly kites or drones near power lines
- Keep fishing rods, masts, and other long equipment well clear of overhead lines
- Do not climb power poles or electrical structures
- Never try to retrieve objects caught in power lines

Electricity can arc, meaning you do not need to touch a power line to be seriously injured.

- [Waterways and dams](#) – staying safe around hydro schemes, canals, and waterways
- [Drones](#) – flying safely around power lines and electrical equipment

If you see a downed line or damaged equipment, stay well back and call 111. For anything specific to your area or network, [find your local lines company](#).



Safer Electricity: Popular Safety Topics

START HERE

Choose the situation that fits you

[Find your local lines company →](#)



At home

Practical safety advice for DIY, digging, trees, children, EVs, and home emergencies.

[View guidance >](#)



At work

Guidance for contractors, builders, scaffolders, and others working near electricity assets.

[View guidance >](#)



On the farm

Stay safe around poles, stay wires, irrigation, machinery, livestock, and underground services.

[View guidance >](#)



Driving

What to know about poles, downed lines, high loads, EVs, and what to do after a vehicle incident.

[View guidance >](#)



Enjoying the outdoors

Advice for waterways, boating, fishing, drones, kites, camping, and staying safe near overhead lines.

[View guidance >](#)

COMMON HAZARDS

Popular safety topics

Quick links to the advice people are most likely to need before starting work, responding to an emergency, or planning an outdoor activity.



Digging or excavation



Storms and emergencies



Kids and recreation



Trees near power lines



Medical dependence



Waterways and generation



Safety Topic: Digging or excavation

Digging and excavation

[← Safer Electricity](#)

Underground electricity cables can run through properties, road corridors, and recreational areas, and are not always visible. Digging without checking first can cause serious injury, electric shock, or damage to the electricity network. Also consider other services such as gas, fibre, and water.

Work near underground electrical equipment must comply with the [New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances \(NZECP 34\)](#), which sets minimum safe distances for excavation work near electrical assets.

Excavation work should also be planned and carried out in accordance with [WorkSafe New Zealand's Excavation Safety Good Practice Guidelines](#), which provide guidance on identifying underground services, managing excavation hazards, and protecting workers and the public.

Always check before you dig, even for small jobs like planting, fencing, drainage, or digging post holes.

Before starting work

- Check underground service plans using beforeUdig
- Identify nearby power poles, pillar boxes, transformers, and underground cables
- Allow enough space to work safely around electrical equipment
- Talk to your local lines company if work will be close to power assets
- Make sure everyone on site understands the hazards and safe work areas



Safety Topic: Digging or excavation continues...

Stay safe

- Always check for underground services before digging using a cable location service
- Treat all underground cables as live
- Hand dig carefully near marked services, and never undermine a cable
- Never assume you know where cables are
- Stop work and seek advice if you are unsure
- Contact your local lines company if work will be close to power poles, transformers, or underground cables

Your local lines company may also be able to help with cable plans, site advice, Close Approach Consents, and competent stand-overs for high-risk work.

If you damage a cable

- Stop work immediately
- Keep people well away
- Do not touch exposed cables
- Call your local lines company and emergency services if required

Treat all damaged cables as live.

Digging near poles or pylons

Take extra care when digging near power poles, stay wires, or transmission pylons. Digging too close can damage foundations or underground services and may affect the stability of the structure.

- Never dig near poles or pylons without checking for underground services first
- Keep machinery and excavation well clear of stay wires and supports
- Contact your local lines company before carrying out excavation close to electrical structures
- Stop work and seek advice if you are unsure



Safety Topic: Trees near powerlines

Trees close to powerlines

[← Safer Electricity](#)

Trees growing too close to power lines can be dangerous. Branches can contact lines, especially during windy conditions, causing electric shock, fires, power outages, or damage to the electricity network.

Electricity can arc, meaning you do not need to touch a power line to be seriously injured.

Trees near power lines are managed under the [Electricity \(Hazards from Trees\) Regulations](#), which help keep people safe and the electricity network reliable.

Tree work near power lines should also be carried out in accordance with WorkSafe New Zealand guidance on the [maintenance of trees around power lines](#), which provides information on safe work practices, responsibilities, and managing electrical hazards when trimming or removing trees near overhead lines.

Plan before you plant or trim

Before planting or trimming trees:

- Look up and identify nearby power lines
- Choose trees and shrubs suitable for planting near lines
- Allow enough space for future tree growth
- Never trim trees near power lines yourself
- Contact your local lines company if trees are close to electrical equipment



Safety Topic: Trees near powerlines continue...

Stay safe

- Keep trees and vegetation well clear of power lines
- Never trim trees within 4 metres of power lines yourself
- Use approved professionals for work near lines
- Keep people, ladders, and tools well clear of overhead lines
- Report trees touching or close to lines to your local lines company

Your local lines company may inspect trees near power lines and issue Cut or Trim Notices where work is required to maintain safe clearances.

Maintaining your trees

Property owners are legally required to keep trees a safe distance away from overhead power lines under the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.

Trees growing too close to power lines can cause electric shock, fires, and power outages. If trees need trimming near power lines, this work must be carried out by an approved contractor.

Note: additional clearances may apply for long spans between poles, and trees protected by district plans may have different requirements.

Got a Cut or Trim Notice?

Your lines company may send a Cut or Trim Notice if trees on your property are growing too close to power lines. These notices explain what work is required and when it must be completed.

If work is not completed within the required timeframe, penalties may apply and you may be responsible for damage caused to power lines or electrical equipment.

Before you plant

Before you plant, look up. Choose trees and shrubs that will not grow into power lines and remember to regularly maintain vegetation near electrical equipment.

Talk to your local garden centre or an arborist about suitable plants for your area.

If you see trees touching or close to power lines

- Stay well clear
- Keep others away
- Contact your local lines company immediately

Treat all power lines as live, including fallen lines.



Safety Topic: Storms and emergencies

Storms and emergencies

← [Safer Electricity](#)

Storms, flooding, earthquakes, vehicle accidents, and other emergencies can damage power lines and electrical equipment. Damaged electrical equipment can remain live and extremely dangerous.

Always stay well clear of fallen lines, damaged poles, trees touching lines, and flooded electrical equipment.

Be prepared

Have an emergency plan and keep important items ready:

- Torch and spare batteries
- Charged mobile phone and power bank
- Battery-powered radio
- Food and water
- Essential medications
- Backup plans if you rely on electricity for medical equipment

Trampolines and unsecured items

High winds can blow trampolines, shade sails, roofing iron, outdoor furniture, tables, chairs, and other unsecured items into power lines.

Before storms:

- Secure or store loose outdoor items
- Anchor trampolines properly
- Lower or remove shade sails where possible
- Secure building materials and outdoor equipment



Safety Topic: Storms and emergencies continue...

Stay safe during storms and emergencies

- Stay well clear of fallen power lines and damaged equipment
- Never touch trees or objects touching lines
- Keep children and animals away from electrical hazards
- Secure outdoor items before storms where possible
- Follow instructions from emergency services and your local lines company

If an object contacts a power line

Never touch or try to retrieve anything touching a power line, including tree branches, kites or balloons, drones, trampolines, fences or outdoor structures, and other wires or cables. Treat all lines as live and keep well clear.

If an object contacts a power line:

- Stay well clear
- Do not try to remove it
- Contact your local lines company immediately

Trees and vegetation

Strong winds can bring trees and branches into contact with power lines.

- Keep well clear of trees touching power lines
- Do not attempt to remove branches yourself
- Report damaged trees or low lines to your local lines company

If you see damaged electrical equipment

If you see fallen lines, damaged poles, exposed cables, or sparking equipment:

- Stay at least 10 metres away
- Warn others to keep clear
- Call your local lines company or 111 if there is immediate danger

Electricity can travel through the ground around damaged equipment, creating a serious risk of electric shock.

- [Power outages](#) – what to do when the power goes out
- [Portable generators](#) – using generators safely during outages
- [Electric shock](#) – what to do if someone receives an electric shock



Safety Topic: Medical dependence

Medical dependence

← Safer Electricity

If you or someone in your household relies on electricity for medical equipment, it is important to be prepared for power outages and emergencies.

Power outages can happen during storms, accidents, equipment damage, or emergency work.

You may be medically dependent if a loss of electricity could put health or life at risk because essential medical equipment needs power. This may include:

- Oxygen concentrators
- CPAP machines or ventilators
- Dialysis equipment
- Feeding or suction devices
- Powered hospital beds

Be prepared

Have an emergency plan in place:

- Know how your equipment operates during a power outage
- Keep backup batteries charged and tested
- Keep important phone numbers available
- Have a torch, mobile phone, and power bank ready
- Plan somewhere safe you can go if power cannot be restored quickly
- Talk to your healthcare provider about backup options



Safety Topic: Medical dependence continue...

During a power outage

- Monitor the person relying on medical equipment closely
- Use backup power if available
- Contact your electricity retailer if you are medically dependent
- Move to your alternative location if needed
- Call 111 if the situation becomes urgent or life-threatening

Your local lines company works to restore power as quickly and safely as possible, but electricity supply cannot be guaranteed at all times.

If you use a backup generator, it must never be connected directly to your household wiring. Doing so risks feeding electricity back into the network, which is a serious safety risk to the public and to lines workers. Any changeover switching between a generator and your household supply must be installed by a licensed electrical practitioner.



Safety Topic: Kids and recreation

Kids

[← Safer Electricity](#)

Electricity helps power our homes, schools, and communities, but it can also be dangerous if not treated safely.

Learn how to stay safe around power lines, electrical equipment, and during storms or emergencies.

Remember

- Never climb power poles or trees near power lines
- Never fly kites or drones near power lines
- Stay away from substations and electrical boxes
- Never touch fallen power lines
- Don't throw objects at power lines
- Tell an adult if you see damaged electrical equipment

If you see something unsafe

- Stay well away
- Tell an adult
- Call emergency services (111) if someone is hurt

More resources

- [Safety for kids](#) – Unison
- [Tree and power line safety](#) – Welectricity



Safety Topic: Waterways and generation

Waterways and dams

[← Safer Electricity](#)

Hydro dams, power stations, canals, and waterways can be dangerous. Water levels and flows can change quickly and without warning when electricity generation equipment starts or stops operating.

Calm water or dry riverbeds can rapidly become fast-moving water with strong currents, undertows, or rising water levels.

Stay safe

- Obey all warning signs, fences, barriers, buoys, and gates
- Stay well clear of dams, spillways, intakes, outlets, and generation equipment
- Never swim, fish, or anchor boats near hydro structures
- Keep away from fast-moving or rising water
- Do not enter restricted areas around dams or power stations
- Stay off dry riverbeds below dams, as water levels can rise suddenly
- Supervise children closely near waterways and electrical equipment

Take extra care when swimming, fishing, boating, kayaking, paddleboarding, or walking near hydro schemes and waterways.

If you see fallen power lines, damaged poles, or unsafe electrical equipment:

- Stay well clear
- Keep others away
- Call your local lines company or 111 if there is immediate danger



PSWG: So!? What now?

- Both the **Public Safety Management System Performance Monitoring Guide** and **Close Approach Consent Guide** will shortly be released for industry consultation. Your feedback will be sought on whether the guidance is practical, proportionate and suitable for electricity generation, transmission and distribution organisations, and whether any areas require further clarification or development.
- The **Safer Electricity public safety website** will in due course be released for industry consultation. Feedback will be sought on a myriad of items.



PSWG: How can I contribute further?

- Consider becoming a group member of the PSWG – we have 1 space available.
 - Caution though, the PSWG is exactly what the name says, a **Working Group**, with work to be done.
 - Also, it takes a bit of effort to join:
 - Manager's written approval - time availed and travel expenses,
 - Cover letter, and
 - Your CV.
- If you don't want to or can't become a group member but feel you have Public Safety / External Stakeholder Safety collateral to share, please do reach out.
- Collaborate and share ideas on the relevant EEA Knowledge Network Forums.



Public Safety into Focus...



PSWG: Questions??

