

# LEGISLATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

Topic: Working near utility lines	Issued by: Director, Compliance and Regulatory Review
Statute: General Regulation 91-191	Date Issued: September 13, 2005
Section: 180(2)	Date Revised: February 1, 2016

180(1) Before beginning an excavation or trench, an employer shall ensure that the location of any underground utility line or piping is determined.

180(2) Where employees are working within 600 mm of underground utility line or piping, an employer shall ensure that

- (a) the authority operating the utility line or piping has been notified of the operation,
- (b) the utility line has been de-energized, and
- (c) an adequate operating procedure is used by the employees.

For the purposes of this interpretation:

**Underground utility line** includes

- Electrical lines
- Telecommunication lines and cable

**Underground piping** includes

- Sewer, water and drain lines
- Gas pipelines

**Question:**

I am a contractor who is required to perform work where there is a risk of contact with underground utility lines. According to the utility line owners, it is not always possible to de-energize utility lines. Are there circumstances where work can be carried out within 600 mm (two feet) of the utility lines without de-energizing them?

**Answer:**

For the purposes of de-energizing found in Section 180(2)(b), it only applies to underground utility lines. The intent of Section 180(2) is to ensure that when employees work close to underground utility lines that proper precautions are taken to ensure that employees are working safely and to prevent damage to the utility lines. When work is within 600 mm of the utility lines, the employer must notify the utility(ies) to have the lines de-energized and use an adequate operating procedure provided by the utility line's owner.

In some instances, the contractor and the utility line owner may determine that it is not practical to de-energize a utility line and employees must conduct work within 600 mm of a utility line that is not de-energized. Examples of when it would not be practical to de-energize the utility line include, but are not limited to:

- There is a potential of loss of life, injuries or property damage if the utility line is de-energized (cutting power to a hospital, ventilation system to an industrial facility, etc.)
- If there is a need for the utility line to be live for testing or troubleshooting purposes.

If the owner of the utility line allows this work, the employer must ensure that employees follow the adequate operating procedure provided by the utility line's owner.