

DOWNED POWER LINES AND MOTOR VEHICLES FACT SHEET

- Motorists across Illinois drive off the road and hit more than 3,000 power poles each year, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation.
- A downed power line that falls on or near an automobile creates an incredibly dangerous situation for both the vehicle occupants, as well as Good Samaritans looking to assist. One does not have to physically touch a downed line to be seriously injured or killed.
- The first inclination in a wreck may be to get out of the vehicle, but in accidents involving a power line, remaining inside is actually the safest option.
- This is because a downed power line may be energized, which energizes the vehicle and the area around it. Leaving the vehicle could cause the body to become a path to ground for the electricity (causing electrocution).
- A downed line may not be arcing, sparking or smoking but remain energized. There is no way to tell whether it's live or dead until the utility is on the scene and can assure the line is no longer energized.
- When involved in such an accident, the first step is to call emergency and utility services (911 and Ameren Illinois at 800-755-5000), and wait calmly inside the vehicle for their arrival on scene.
- If you happen to witness a car collision with a power pole, do not approach the accident under any circumstance. You could put your life at risk by trying to help.
- Upon arriving at the scene, Ameren Illinois will secure the area and cut power, which ensures the line is de-energized. Only then is it safe for all occupants to exit the vehicle.
- The sole scenario in which occupants should exit before Ameren Illinois arrives is in the event the automobile begins to smoke or catches fire.
- If this happens, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Land with both feet together on the ground. Then hop with both feet still together so there will not be a voltage difference between your feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body. Hop as far away as you can.
- Power poles often line the sides of streets and highways. Staying alert on the road and constantly scanning for potential hazards is the best way to avoid a dangerous power line on car accident situation.
- Activities like talking on the phone, reading, and watching a video take a driver's attention away from the road and driving conditions. Even if you look down to send a quick text message or change the radio station, remember, it only takes an instant for an accident to happen.
- Make sure to exercise caution while driving in strong winds and storms. Ameren Illinois maintains exceptionally strong and sturdy infrastructure, but every so often, a storm can cause overhead lines to topple down.
- If one of these toppled lines end up on an occupied vehicle, the same safety protocols apply. Additionally, don't drive over a downed line laying across the road. Never try to move a power line out of the roadway. Instead, immediately call Ameren Illinois at 800.755.5000 to clear the hazard. Find an alternate route to your destination.

