

## Always remember that:

- If effective measures are not adopted to protect their equipment, the local electricity company will take steps to recover the cost of any damage caused. Promptness in reporting an incident will minimise costs.
- In most cases it is not practicable to make cables dead without interrupting supplies to the local electricity company's customers.
- Persons causing damage resulting in loss of supply to customers can be held legally responsible for any damage to the plant or equipment of these customers.
- Given adequate notice the local electricity company will, wherever possible, give advice regarding special precautions which may be necessary on any site where particular problems are likely to be encountered. The right is reserved to make a charge for this service.
- Electricity cables can exist anywhere - under paths or roads, in gardens or driveways, on new housing or industrial development sites or even farmland.

## For your information

This leaflet is intended to help all those who have to excavate ground. Having located danger areas, employers are asked to ensure that their operatives are fully instructed in the correct procedures.

The Health and Safety Executive have produced a document entitled 'Avoiding Danger from Underground Services', and Appendix 1 deals specifically with electric cables. Copies are available from HMSO's Accredited Agents and good booksellers, Ref HS G 47.

**In situations of danger, where the advice contained in this leaflet cannot be followed, consult the local electricity company immediately.**

**Safety advice brought to you by  
Southern Electric Power Distribution plc  
Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution plc.**

## Watch it!

**when digging in the vicinity of  
underground electric cables**



### The electricity at work regulations 1989

impose health and safety requirements upon employers, employees and self-employed persons with respect to electricity at work. The regulations impose restrictions on persons being engaged in work activities on or near live conductors.

#### Regulation 14 requires that:

“No person shall be engaged in any work activity on or near any live conductor (other than one suitably covered with insulating material so as to prevent danger) that danger may arise unless:

- it is **unreasonable** in all circumstances for it to be dead; and
- it is **reasonable** in all circumstances for him to be at work on or near it while it is live; and
- suitable precautions (including where necessary the provision of suitable protective equipment) are taken to prevent injury.

The purpose of the regulations is to require precautions to be taken against the risk of death or personal injury from electricity in work activities.

## For your own and your workmates' safety, please follow the **do's** and **don'ts** listed below:

**do** make sure you have plans of the underground cables in the area **before** any excavation work starts. Remember that some cables may not be shown on plans. If carrying out emergency work, excavate as though there are buried live cables in the vicinity.

**do** use a cable locator to determine the position of existing cables in the work area. The positions should be marked and tests made as work proceeds. **If in doubt, get advice from your supervisor.**

**do** ask for cable to be made dead if it is buried in concrete.

**do** watch for signs of cables as work progresses. Note any marker-tape or cable-cover which may be exposed.

**do** backfill carefully, using stone-free soil around the cables, replacing marker-tapes and/or covers.

**do** notify the local electricity company should accidental damage to cables occur. Arrange to keep people well clear of cable that has been damaged.

**do** make sure before starting to demolish a building that all cables have been disconnected. Local electricity companies welcome prior notice of the intention to demolish buildings. This enables the company's staff to ensure that the site has been made safe electrically.

**don't** operate a bulldozer, scraper, dragline or excavator unless you are satisfied that there are no buried cables in the working area.

**don't** use picks, pins, forks or pointed instruments in soft clay or soil when cables are present. Exercise extreme caution where such instruments are used to free lumps of stone, or break up firmly compacted ground. **Never** throw a fork or sharp instrument into the ground.

**don't** dig trial holes over the indicated route of the cable. Excavate alongside instead.

**don't** use exposed cables as a convenient step or handhold.

**don't** handle or attempt to alter the position of any cable.

**Remember** that a damaged cable may cause extensive loss of supplies, make expensive repairs necessary, and **cause serious or even fatal injury.**

**If in any doubt, ask the local electricity company.**

