



SP Energy Networks: Public Safety

Stuart Fuller-Shapcott, Ford Village, Northumberland

Stuart Shapcott, a contracted crop sprayer in Coldstream, was carrying out work at Ford Hill Farm, in Cornhill-on-Tweed in the Borders when his tractor, which was fitted with a large spraying arm, came into contact with 11,000 volt overhead power lines.

While spraying the field of peas, Stuart had not noticed a power line above him and began to fold the arm of his tractor. The end of the boom on his vehicle caught the power line and he immediately realised that he was in danger of being electrocuted.

Stuart, who has a background in electrical engineering and knowledge of safety procedures, was aware of the dangers of exiting his cab so he knew to wait inside until help arrived. He made emergency contact, from his mobile phone, with his employer's control room and within an hour SP Energy Networks had arrived. The power was isolated and then they were able to disentangle the machine from the power lines. There was no damage to the sprayer or to Stuart however, the fault resulted in 94 nearby properties temporarily losing power supplies until the incident was safely resolved.

Stuart said: "I never thought this would happen to me but knowing what to do in that emergency situation saved my life, without that knowledge the incident could have had a much more serious outcome. I would advise others working with machinery to look out for power lines and to stop and think – the danger of death sign means what it says."

Working near power lines can prove fatal if the right precautions are not taken. In the last ten years there have been eleven work-related deaths in the agricultural sector, caused by contact with overhead power lines. In this type of emergency situation when the machine couldn't be driven away safely, the safest course of action was to stay inside the cab and telephone for emergency assistance. Getting out of a vehicle in contact with power lines can cause fatal injuries; it should only be attempted if there is a real threat of fire and the advice is to jump clear of the vehicle and bunny hop or take leaping strides at least 10 metres away from the machine. With the increasing

height of modern farm machinery such as telescopic handlers and combine harvesters, the risk of contact with a power line is more likely now than ever before.

SP Energy Networks manages more than 30,000 substations, 40,000km of overhead lines and 65,000km of underground cables, connecting 3.5 million homes and businesses in Central and Southern Scotland and Cheshire, Merseyside and North Wales. The company works closely with farmers all year round, and over the summer the energy distributor's safety experts have been exhibiting at The Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh and The Cheshire County Show.

