

**Stillwater Fire District**  
**Stillwater, New York**

Fire District Policy and Procedure

Policy Number: 4 of 2010

Policy Name: Wires Down Policy

Date Issued: March 8, 2010

Effective: March 8, 2010

Revised: June 2013

Review Date: January 2017

**I. PURPOSE**

A. The purpose of this policy is to provide a uniform response to electrical wires down and any similar type calls. This policy is meant to guide all first response personnel in the response to electrical wires down during normal day to day operations and during times of significant storm or disaster activity.

**II. PROCEDURE**

A. Level of Response

1. Initial response shall be a Priority 1 for the first out unit, priority 2 for subsequent units unless there is an unequivocal indication of immediate threat to life or property such as associated fire or entrapment.
2. County Dispatch shall be consulted for additional information associated with the call. If it is found that life or property is threatened, the call can be upgraded to the Priority 1 for subsequent units.
3. The closest engine to the incident shall respond to the incident and shall coordinate with any other apparatus that has responded.
4. The second piece of apparatus to respond shall be a support or utility unit.
5. Consideration should be given to responding departmental utility units to be used at traffic control as replacements for full size apparatus.

B. Actions to be Taken

1. The first arriving unit shall perform size up of the situation and report to Fire Dispatch.
2. Size up information shall include, utility provider, pole number if available, street address to the nearest residence, closest cross street, and the type of problem or type of wires down, if known.
3. Place fire apparatus in a location which is deemed to be safe in the event that additional energized wires become detached from the poles.
4. Fire police shall deploy incident signs, traffic control devices and shall both provide safe highway conditions for responders but shall also provide safety zone surveillance for the hazard.
5. Department personnel shall not move, touch or approach downed wires under any circumstances and as such must presume that they are energized.

6. Caution must be exercised with non-electrical transmission wires and other conductive objects such as fences or guiderails since they also may be energized.
  7. Traffic control measures shall be initiated in the event that a roadway is impacted but in no circumstances should traffic control measures be initiated if traffic can move without discretion.
    - (a) Fire Department personnel shall exercise caution in controlling traffic and shall utilize all recommended safety standards including personal vests or other traffic control devices.
    - (b) The replacement of fire department personnel with staff from law enforcement, public works or the responsible utility shall take place as quickly as possible.
    - (c) For long duration incidents, fire department personnel shall not be on post longer than 3 hours before they are rotated out and consideration for hydration and protection from the weather shall be considered.
    - (d) Full road closures may be required and shall be initiated utilizing the appropriate signage and signaling measures. County Dispatch shall be informed of any road closures.
- C. Rescue if Required
1. Attempted rescue of persons entrapped in vehicles or structures shall not be attempted prior to confirmation from the responsible utility representative that the power has been de-energized.
- D. Fire Attack
1. A fire caused by or evolving energized electrical sources shall not be attempted until there is positive confirmation by a responsible utility representative that the power has been de-energized.
  2. Be aware of fires being caused by energized electrical wires in an area where a fire would not normally occur.
  3. Suppression efforts should not be initiated in the area of downed power transmission wires and applies to a communication or power distribution vault or transformer substation involved in fire.
  4. Fire suppression efforts should be directed toward threatened exposures which are a safe distance from the "hot" zone. A hot zone being defined as the area directly impacted by the effects of an energized electrical source which may be difficult to determine.
- E. Stand by Procedures
1. Fire department personnel responding to wire down incidents where there is possible danger to the general public, shall not leave the scene until relieved by qualified personnel from another agency or released by a responsible representative of the utility.
    - (a) This is particularly important in cases involving high tension power transmission lines.
    - (b) Service drops to residences are those lines that come off a step down transformer. While these lines are as dangerous as any other power transmission lines and are potentially lethal, in times of high volume storm activity, these lines can be flagged, cordoned off and reported down through Fire Dispatch. The homeowner shall also be advised of

the actions being taken by the fire department and shall be advised to avoid the area due to the danger involved.

2. Fire personnel at the scene of wires down shall attempt to obtain a utility response time from the dispatcher. Fire Dispatch shall be contacted on a regular basis to determine response time.
  3. The Incident Commander or the Apparatus OIC shall maintain a minimal presence on the scene of wires down for both apparatus and personnel. All staff shall be held in station until the scene is cleared or at the discretion of the Incident Commander.
- F. Significant Storm/Disaster Operations
1. During the times of significant storm activity, it is not unusual to receive multiple reports of wires down, in those cases the following are guidelines;
    - (a) Standard operating procedures shall be followed when possible.
    - (b) All reports of wires down shall be investigated as they are received and as personnel or equipment is available to respond.
    - (c) The priority of the incident shall be part of the size up and communicated to the County Dispatch, considering the magnitude of the event.
    - (d) Units dispatched to the scene of wires down may be expanded to include any vehicle available. Staffing in such cases shall be staged at the stations and shall be limited in response.
    - (e) All vehicles must be equipped with some type of communication device, either radio or cell phone.
    - (f) Where there is significant damage to the power transmission system within a particular area, and where a state of emergency is in effect, it may be permissible to flag the area with some type of obvious warning indication and leave the site upon reporting and documenting the conditions in order to respond to additional calls.
    - (g) In wide spread, weather related incidents all actions shall be documented at the established command post and related to the responsible utility through established protocols.
    - (h) It is not out of the question to request a utility representative to be liaison at the command post in a large scale incident. Requests shall be made through the County Emergency Management Office.

By Order of Board of Fire Commissioners – Stillwater Fire District

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Chairman Board of Fire Commissioners