

Overhead Power Lines: Plan the Clearance

COMPANY

PROJECT

DATE

PRESENTED BY

Cranes, boom lifts, ladders, and long materials can put work close to overhead power lines. Before moving equipment or raising materials, we need a clear plan that keeps the work away from the lines. A shortcut or an unplanned move can defeat that plan.

Find the lines before starting

- Look overhead along the work area and planned travel routes. Point out lines near equipment setup areas, material storage, and places where ladders or long pieces will be raised.
- For crane operations, the employer must identify the work zone. When boundaries are marked, the operator must not operate beyond them. Make sure everyone understands where those boundaries are.
- Check the crane's full possible reach in that zone, not just the first planned lift. Include the boom, load line, load, rigging, and lifting accessories.

Know the crane clearance plan

- If any part could get closer than 20 feet to a line, the employer must select the required protection option before operations begin. Do not start while that decision is unresolved.
- One option is utility confirmation that the line is deenergized and visibly grounded at the worksite. That means the power is off and grounding is visible. A crew member's assumption is not confirmation.
- Other options use 20-foot clearance or the voltage-based clearance in Table A, with required protective measures. Do not guess the voltage or invent a smaller distance. These crane provisions are not a universal clearance rule for every tool or lift.

Make the controls work

- For clearance-based crane operations, hold the required planning meeting with the operator and nearby workers. Review line locations, boundaries, and how the crew will prevent equipment or loads from getting too close.
- Maintain the required elevated warning line, barricade, or signs with visible markings. Position them at the clearance selected under the plan, where the operator can see them.
- If the operator cannot see the elevated warning line, a dedicated spotter is required along with an additional protective measure. The spotter must be positioned to judge clearance effectively.

Stop when the plan changes

- Do not assume crane work directly below a line is allowed. It is generally prohibited unless utility-confirmed deenergizing and visible grounding, or a specific regulatory exception, permits it.
- Before repositioning a boom lift, ladder, or long material near lines, review the route with the foreman. As a practical precaution, choose staging and handling locations away from overhead lines.
- Stop and report an unclear boundary, blocked warning line, or changed load path. Resume only after the clearance plan has been checked and the needed controls are in place.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

A crane's next load is longer than planned and may swing toward a power line. A nearby crew also wants to carry ladders through that area. What would you stop, and what needs review before either task continues?

Questions for the crew

1. What parts of the crane operation must be included when checking reach?
2. Who must confirm that a line is deenergized and visibly grounded?
3. What changes would make you stop and call the foreman?

| Know the lines, follow the clearance plan, and stop whenever the work no longer matches the plan.

Sources: 29 CFR 1926.1408, Power line safety (up to 350 kV)—equipment operations

Drafted with AI for review by a competent person. Clever Rook writes from the official regulation text it cites, but it doesn't know your site. Check it against your conditions and your company's safety program before use. Not legal advice.

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REVIEWED BY (COMPETENT PERSON)

REVIEW DATE

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