

TWO WINDOW CLEANERS HAVE DIED USING WATER-FED POLES

There are no second chances with electricity. Your life can be lost within seconds if you come into contact with overhead power lines, Accidental contact with live overhead power lines kills people and causes many serious injuries every year, and the window cleaning industry is no exception.

Sadly, we report that the window cleaning industry has had two recent fatalities with water fed poles touching live electric cables whilst working on domestic properties.

An overhead line does not have to be touched to cause serious injury or death as electricity can jump, or arc, across small gaps; going close to a live overhead line can result in a flashover that may kill. Voltages lower than 230 volts can kill and injure people, electricity can bypass wood, plastic or rubber, if it is damp or dirty, and cause fatal shocks. Don't rely on gloves or rubber boots to protect you.

Always **look up and look out** for the presence of overhead lines first as contact can be fatal or cause life changing injuries. Think how this would affect your family, your income, yourself?

Please consider the following before setting up your water-fed pole:

- Don't assume your pole is electrically tested. Some water-fed poles available are tested and insulated against electrical hazards, however some are not.
- Don't assume your pole has an insulated handle.
- Don't assume overhead power lines on wooden poles are for telephone wire.
- Do consider the risks associated with working close to overhead lines when going on customers properties.
- Do make sure employees have been suitably trained to identify and avoid overhead electrical hazards.
- Do always Risk Assess...whether your pole is insulated or not.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- Before setting up any water-fed poles consider and plan the safe height clearance of your equipment.
- Identify where the overhead lines are. If there are overhead power lines present, you may want to consider the use of electrically tested insulated poles
- Attention must be given to safe height clearance throughout your time on site, including whenever you reposition your equipment, through to the dismantling and removal at the end of the day.
- Make sure all employees on site can **identify where the overhead power lines are** and that they fully understand the risks and the appropriate **emergency procedure**.
- Is your water fed pole in danger of touching or getting too close to overhead lines – keep observing as you proceed with your work?
- Be aware too of any obstacles that may present trip hazards such as plant pots, uneven floor levels, varying levels of ground, kerbs etc, that are located in the work area.

For more information on working safely using water-fed poles click the title below:

[Safety in window cleaning using water fed pole systems](#)

See HSE guidance note GS6 "[Avoiding danger from overhead power lines](#)" describes how to work safely near overhead power lines in a range of industries.

More information on overhead powerlines can be found at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/information/overhead.htm>

Please Be Bright and Stay Safe!