

# PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 101

<b>Date:</b> January 2026	<b>Focus Group:</b> PCBUs with H&S Duties
<b>Topic:</b> Live Lines – Hidden Hazard After Storm	<b>Issued by:</b> Nic Steens

**Background:** A storm brought down an old (no. 8 wire) conductor when a tree fell into the powerline corridor. The area was scheduled for a line upgrade, with the network owner due to remove the old conductor before any harvesting or extraction began in that area. Storm damage led to an unplanned early move into the area, and the downed line was not remembered or recognised on the ground. The machine operator encountered the windthrown tree blocking the track and began extracting it, until **steam rose from the ground**, indicating electrical arcing. Work stopped immediately.

**Injury and Damage Details:** No injury occurred — however, this was a **high-potential** event. Live line contact can cause electrocution, severe burns, or machine loss.

**Risk Awareness:** Live powerlines are unforgiving hazards. After storms, downed lines can become hidden, immediate threats, especially when conductors are on the ground, obscured by fallen trees, or resemble fence wire. In this event, changing conditions turned a hazard with planned controls into an unexpected critical risk.

## Safe Behaviours and Basics – Clearing hang-ups in thinning:

- After storms or major changes, stop and reassess hazards before starting work.
- Treat all downed wires as LIVE until confirmed isolated — never assume fence wire.
- Clearly mark and communicate powerline corridors before operations begin.
- Do not rely on memory or old maps — recheck plans and physically verify corridors.
- Use an ‘upset condition trigger’: **“Storm damage present = Stop, Check, Confirm.”**

### For Site Manager:

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators: ☐
2. Place on-site notice board or in file: ☐

**Site Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**    /    /  
(initials)

