

Electrical utility safety updates

What you need to know about important additions and revisions to the Electrical Utility Safety Rules and Utility Work Protection Code.



Electrical Utility Safety Rules

For more than 100 years, the *Electrical Utility Safety Rules* (EUSR) book has been the foundation of health and safety education in the electrical utilities industry. It also provides guidance for other types of work, such as arboriculture, which may be performed on or near electrical transmission or distribution systems. Grounded in the knowledge and experience of industry experts, the EUSR helps workers identify and control jobsite electrical hazards.

IHSA revised the new edition of the EUSR in collaboration with Hydro One. It contains the following changes, which came into effect on January 1, 2024:

The term **Testing Facility** replaces **Certified Laboratory** throughout the EUSR. A **Testing Facility** tests in accordance with applicable standards and has established specific testing standards for electrical equipment, tools, protective equipment, and aerial devices.

Rule 103 “Personal Conduct” specifies that electronic devices must not be used in **workplace(s)** where they will affect the safety of work being performed.

Rule 110 “First Aid” has been modified to require that AEDs be provided, maintained, and suitably located on site when two or more **workers** are working in an **energized** electrical environment.

Rule 114 “Safe Conditions for Work” explains that:

- Work requiring the application of the **Utility Work Protection Code (UWPC)** must be strictly followed.
- Recertification in the **UWPC** must be completed every 27 months or earlier.
- All **UWPC** training must be given exclusively by Hydro One, IHSA, or an IHSA Member Employer who maintains certification through the Train the Trainer program.

Rule 119 “Use of Temporary Grounds” requires that temporary grounds be tested annually and marked with a legible expiry date.

Rule 122 “Working Alone” outlines that, when a second **worker** is required, they shall be:

- Knowledgeable in the hazards associated in the task being performed.
- A suitably equipped, **competent worker** who can perform rescue operations including CPR and AED.
- Available and positioned to see the **worker** performing the work.

The **IHSA Supplemental Rule on Line Clearing Operations** includes a new addition—called the “Ground-to-Ground Rule for Line Clearing Operations”—specifying that **authorized workers** may be permitted to ascend/descend vegetation without rubber gloves provided that it’s outside the restricted zone, according to Rule 129 “Safe Limits of Approach: For **Authorized Workers**,” and that all climbing equipment and the climber can remain outside of proximity while ascending/descending. Once aloft, appropriately rated gloves must be worn when entering proximity, maintaining the **Safe Limits of Approach** for tools, equipment, and the **authorized worker** while removing vegetation.

Utility Work Protection Code

The *Utility Work Protection Code* (UWPC) is part of a strict set of rules governing work that takes place in and around high-voltage electrical plants. The Code's extensive system of permits and tags helps create an environment where electrical hazards are reduced or eliminated, by showing when it is safe to work on lines or equipment.

An updated version of the UWPC will be released in 2024, with the following major changes:

All **tags and forms** are updated with new wording and layouts, and all colour references are removed from the Code.

The UWPC's **Glossary of Terms** has updated definitions that explain how the rules are to be read and applied. Various notes, bullets, and numerical requirements have also been adjusted.

Rule 1.013 no longer defines what a work permit is. (This information has moved to the Glossary.) Instead, the new rule deals with elements of a work permit and what the permit must include.

Rule 1.092 outlines new non-series numbered PC3 tags. A new tag has been added for the Establishing Authority to record the permit number or unique identifier on the tag to be applied to a guaranteed device.

Rule 1.101 specifies a longer time period for the retention of prepared work protection forms and tags. They must now be kept for a minimum of two years.

Rule 1.102 requires that printed names must accompany all signatures on work protection forms. Previously, the rule stated that printed names were required for signatures that were not "clear and legible."

Rule 1.151 and 1.152 are new additions to the UWPC. They specify that any departure from the Code must be documented and approved by Hydro One, the Power Worker's Union, and the Society of United Professionals. Any foreign organization outside Hydro One must contact IHSA to initiate the departure process. (IHSA will then engage Hydro One.)

Rule 1.161 is another new rule, noting that all workplaces must review how they use and apply the Code at least once a year. The review must be shared with the organization's joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative.

Rule 5.016 and 6.011 include new notes about using temporary nomenclature to identify a device's designation, in cases where nomenclature does not exist.



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LISTEN to episode 77 of the *IHSA Safety Podcast*, which looks at the *Electrical Utility Safety Rules*, and episode 79 on the *Utility Work Protection Code*: ihsasafetypodcast.ca