

Q&A with KAP and Manitoba Hydro

The relationship between farmers and Manitoba Hydro is complex and intertwined. Manitoba Hydro relies on access to farmland for distribution and transmission lines, and farmers rely on Manitoba Hydro to provide electricity and natural gas services to their farms. KAP policy on resource development states:

Any proposed project or regulation that affects land and resource use must undergo a complete cost-impact analysis to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on the sustainability of farm operations.

Where financial harm is incurred, adequate compensation must be provided to all affected property owners. Farmers should be compensated for the increased liability risks associated with placement of infrastructure on private land and compensation should be made available on an annual basis. Compensation must be assessed at a rate that recognizes the ongoing financial impact to landowners.

KAP encourages Manitoba Hydro to, wherever possible, install hydro lines in a manner than minimizes disruption to farm practices.

In recent years there have been a variety of resolutions passed calling on KAP to work with Manitoba Hydro on issues such as line height, permitting, and biosecurity. In an attempt to disseminate some of the information that KAP has collected, the following is a question and answer segment that addresses some of the most prominent issues brought forward from Manitoba's farmers.

- 1) How many line and pole contacts occur on farms in Manitoba every year?
Over the past 3 years (2017 – 2019) there have been 452 contacts with hydro plant involving farm equipment, an average of 151 contacts per year. Cultivators and air seeders account for 45% of these contacts. Tractors account for 11% of total contacts, followed by combines and disc harrows at 10%, and augers at 8%. Most contacts with hydro plant involving farm equipment are preventable.
- 2) What happens to the farmer and their equipment when contact occurs?
If farm equipment contacts an overhead power line, DO NOT get off the machinery unless you are in immediate danger. If you touch the ground and the machine/equipment at the same time, then you'll become a path for the electricity to travel to the ground. If you must leave the machinery, jump clear and land with feet together and arms close to the body. Keep your feet touching each other and shuffle 10 metres away from the machinery or the fallen wire. Don't go back for any reason and never get back on the machinery that is touching the power line until Manitoba Hydro has safely disconnected and de-energized the line.
- 3) Who is liable when damage is incurred and who covers the cost of repairs?
If a power line is pulled down or a pole damaged due to contact with farm equipment, the operator of the machinery would be responsible for the cost of repairs. However, if the farmer was travelling on an approved route and had a farm equipment move clearance permit for that piece of equipment, they would not be liable if contact was made with an overhead power line.

4) How can line and pole contact be prevented?

Farmers and farm workers should be familiar with the location of all overhead power lines in the area you are working. Knowing the height and width of the equipment and planning a safe route to transport the equipment can also prevent contact with hydro plant. Move equipment slowly and carefully, maintaining a safe distance of three metres from the power line. As with the operation of any motor vehicle, be patient and mindful of your surroundings.

5) What is the process for getting a Farm Equipment Move Clearance Permit and how often are permits required?

A Farm Equipment Move Clearance Permit is required from Manitoba Hydro if farmers are moving equipment over 4.8 metres in height. Application forms are available on-line at https://www.hydro.mb.ca/accounts_and_services/permits_and_inspections/farm_equipment_move, or by calling 1-888-624-9376. When applying for the annual permit the farmer must provide a description of the equipment including type, height and width, as well as a planned route. The route can be identified on a municipal landowner map with road and highway numbers clearly marked, as well as field access points. Manitoba Hydro will review the route, provide suggestions for an alternate route if necessary, and confirm if the route is safe and allows for adequate clearance. We may measure and upgrade the height of the line to meet minimum standards. The Farm Equipment Move Clearance permit expires on December 31st each year and must be applied for annually.

6) If a farmer has multiple pieces of equipment that are over height are they required to get multiple Farm Equipment Move Clearance permits?

A permit is required for every piece of equipment that is over 4.8 metres in height even though it may be using the same route.

7) What are the minimum height requirements for power lines?

The published standard that Manitoba Hydro builds to is a 4.8 metre minimum conductor height over roadways. We endeavor to have much more than that where possible, but to ensure customer safety, an approved route is required for all equipment over 4.8 metres in height.

8) Under what circumstances should a farmer request a line lift and how should they go about getting one?

Farmers requesting a line lift would complete a Structure Move Clearance Permit application - https://www.hydro.mb.ca/accounts_and_services/permits_and_inspections/oversize_move

It may take up to ten days to plan and schedule based on resources required.

Manitoba Hydro's Farm Equipment Move Clearance permit is the preferred method for moving farm machinery.

https://www.hydro.mb.ca/accounts_and_services/permits_and_inspections/farm_equipment_move/ Farmers can apply for both permits on-line or by visiting one of our CSC offices for assistance.

9) Are there general rules for farm equipment around power lines?

Farming Safely Around Electrical Power Lines:

- Plan your route carefully before moving oversized equipment. Avoid low hanging power lines by taking another route.
- Know the height of your equipment to ensure adequate clearance; share this information with everyone who works on the farm.

- Check the height of new equipment before you take it home – remember air seeders and cultivators can be taller during transport than when in use.
- Never transport metal elevators, metal irrigation pipes or metal ladders near power lines.

10) Who is responsible/liable for damage to Manitoba Hydro infrastructure? This can include poles, power lines, and natural gas lines.

Generally, the individual who causes the damage is responsible for replacement costs or repairs to Manitoba Hydro infrastructure. However, if they received prior approval to dig using our ClickBeforeYouDigMB.com program, or had an agricultural equipment move permit, they would not be responsible for contacting underground electrical or natural gas lines or overhead lines if they were working in the areas identified on the approved permits. The Workplace Safety & Health Act as well as Manitoba Regulations clearly defines who as employers is responsible based on the actions that may occur.

11) Should farmers contact Manitoba Hydro before digging into the ground?

Manitoba Hydro is part of the ClickBeforeYouDigMB.com service provided by the Manitoba Common Ground Alliance. A landowner can request natural gas and electrical line locates, along with many other utility locates, with one online request or phone call.

ClickBeforeYouDigMB.com is free, simple to use and available 24/7. Once an online request is submitted and the locate is scheduled, Manitoba Hydro will mark the utility-owned underground natural gas and electrical lines free of charge. You must send a locate request to ClickBeforeYouDigMB.com at least three full working days before you intend to begin any project that involves excavation or disturbing the ground deeper than 15 cm. If you don't have access to a computer, you can call ClickBeforeYouDigMB at 1-800-940-3447.

12) What can a farmer do about getting a natural gas line out to their farm?

Farmers may apply for electrical or natural gas service by completing an on-line form at https://www.hydro.mb.ca/accounts_and_services/services_and_lighting/agricultural/ Once the completed form has been submitted, the farmer will be contacted by a Manitoba Hydro representative. The process to extend gas service to rural customers can take several months.

13) Who can farmers contact to learn more about their natural gas capacity for running grain dryers?

A Grain Dryer Guide was developed by representatives from the Office of the Fire Commissioner, Manitoba Agriculture, Manitoba Hydro and propane suppliers. This guide can assist you with the installation and operation of grain dryers.

http://www.firecomm.gov.mb.ca/docs/grain_dryer_guide_2019.pdf

14) What procedures does Manitoba Hydro follow prior to gaining access to farmland and/or easements?

Good working relationships between Manitoba Hydro, property owners and tenants along a right-of-way are essential to the safety and reliability of our electrical transmission and pipeline system. For example, on the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project, a robust landowner engagement process was in place. A Manitoba Hydro staff member was assigned to each landowner to liaise with land agents and surveyors regarding easements and work scheduling.

In an emergency, the Manitoba Hydro Act allows crews unimpeded access to all land when maintenance, repair or replacement of electrical plant is required. In such cases, landowners would not be contacted.

15) What protocol has Manitoba Hydro undertaken to ensure it is following farmland biosecurity protocols?

We engage with producers to understand their specific needs and align our existing protocols accordingly. Listed are a few examples:

- On the MMTP project, our liaisons worked within farm-level biosecurity protocols to help with construction preparations.
- On the Bipole III project, a producer requested we use a specific disinfectant when working on their land to align with their protocols.
- A producer required urgent natural gas work done on their property while it was under quarantine. Manitoba Hydro coordinated the work with the producer and Manitoba Agriculture to ensure all biosecurity needs were met to carry out the work required.

16) What is Manitoba Hydro doing to ensure the services provided to rural communities are current and meet the needs of modern agriculture?

There are approximately 1.2 million wooden hydro poles in Manitoba. Of those, 106,000 must be replaced over the next couple of decades. Additionally, there is over 72,000 km of overhead conductors in the province of which 5,700 km will need replacing over the same period. Manitoba Hydro is investing in replacing aging infrastructure in rural Manitoba, upgrading capacity in areas where we experience strong growth, inspecting and changing damaged, rotten or infested poles, ensuring ground resistance standards are adequate, and increasing and monitoring road clearances to ensure safe travel on roadways.

17) Who can farmers contact if they are experiencing disruptions, or have general inquiries about their Manitoba Hydro services?

Customers can contact 204-480-5900 or toll free 1-888-624-9376 (1-888-MB-HYDRO), or visit one of the following Manitoba Hydro Customer Service Centers for service inquiries:

- **Lac du Bonnet** - 120 Minnewawa St.
- **Morden** - South side of Hwy. 3
- **Steinbach** - 175 North Front Dr.
- **Selkirk** - 805 Greenwood Ave.
- **Portage La Prairie** - 50-14th St. NE
- **Ashern** - 34-1st St.
- **Arborg** - 389 Main St.
- **Dauphin** - 480 Whitmore Ave.
- **Neepawa** - 500 Main St. E.
- **Swan River** - 105 Valley Rd.
- **Russell** - Hwy. 45 E.
- **Brandon** - 2505 Victoria Ave. E.
- **Virden** - 100 Airport Rd.
- **Killarney** - 993 Railway St. N.
- **The Pas** - 420-3rd St. E.
- **Thompson** - Hwy. 6 Rd. 1.

Customers can make bill payments and service inquiries online. See www.hydro.mb.ca/accounts_and_services for more information about on-line services and bill payment options.

For service disruptions, customers can submit an outage report online at <https://www.hydro.mb.ca/outages/index.shtml>. A mobile-friendly outage map is updated every 15 minutes with data from Manitoba's Outage Management System. Information includes planned and unplanned outages, and the number of customers affected.

More detailed information such as the cause of an outage and estimated time of restoration is available on Manitoba Hydro's Twitter profile.