



Supervision Guideline for Apprentice Lineworkers (Distribution)

This Guideline has been developed by the Victorian Electricity Supply Industry (VESI) Skills and Training Reference Committee to provide guidance to employers and apprentices.

*In the Victorian
Electricity Supply
Industry*

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DATE	VERSION	AMENDMENT	NAME
NOVEMBER 2005	1	Final	ADAM BEEL
JUNE 2009	2	Final	VESI STRC
AUGUST2010	3	Updated safety observer section & Table 1 to include SAD Special considerations	VESI STRC
SEPTEMBER 2011	4	New cover page Updated footer and version number Update link in Introduction Updated Scope reference General formatting Updated Tables 1 and 2	VESI STRC
JULY2013	5	Aligned content to the suite of Supervision Guidelines to ensure consistency across all Guidelines General formatting Updated footer and version number	VESI STRC
NOVEMBER 2013	6	New section in regards to the application of Safe Approach Distance - Special	VESI STRC
SEPTEMBER 2014	7	Updated the Supervision level definitions Removed Two Man Work Parties with One Apprentice clause. Network operators to have processes in place if they require this work practice. Adjusted Table 1 - Work Types; Public Lighting - PL Maintenance & Repair (live) to reflect the same as Live Low Voltage Work	VESI STRC
AUGUST 2022	8	Reviewed in line with new Course Code UET30621 - Certificate III in ESI - Distribution Overhead. Removed reference to Cable Jointing	VESI STRC
APRIL 2024	9	Updated Work Types table to clarify working on and near energised assets Updated Frequently Asked Questions and notes to clarify working on structures under EAP with energised assets	VESI STRC

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INTRODUCTION

This Guideline has been developed and established by the Victorian Electricity Supply Industry, (VESI) Skills and Training Reference Committee (STRC). Any changes to this Guideline can only be made with the agreement of the VESI STRC.

PURPOSE

This Guideline has been developed to assist both employers and Distribution Lineworker Apprentices who enter into a training contract, to understand the obligations and expectations in regards to workplace supervision, taking into consideration the welfare of the apprentice in terms of safety and competency development.

SCOPE

This Guideline applies to the supervision of Distribution Lineworker Apprentices employed in the VESI who are undertaking an apprenticeship to the National Distribution Lineworker Qualification.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer

- Ensure that employees meet the requirements of this Guideline
- Shall take all reasonable steps to ensure supervision of apprentices is carried out by a person that is competent to carry out the work
- Establish effective coaching/mentoring practices for their apprentices
- Provide opportunities for the Apprentice to develop their knowledge and skills

Supervisors/Crew Leaders

- Ensure that apprentices and relevant employees meet the supervision requirements of this Guideline
- Apply this Guideline when planning or allocating work functions and activities in the work place for apprentices
- Take into consideration the kind of work being undertaken, especially with regard to live low voltage work or work in the vicinity of live apparatus
- Have regard to the level of competence of the apprentice for the particular task, skill or activity to be performed

Apprentices

- Only undertake work or activity for which they have been trained and/or supervised in accordance with this Guideline.

SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK

The Supervision framework describes the criteria and supervision levels that the employer and Apprentice shall allow for when planning work.

In determining the appropriate level of supervision to apply the following criteria shall be considered:

- Safety of the apprentice
- The work to be carried out
- The experience level of the apprentice
- When the knowledge and skills is attained (off job training)

Apprentices should not undertake tasks unless they have received the relevant training. However, this does not restrict an apprentice from observing or assisting qualified personnel undertaking tasks, for which the apprentice is not trained. For example, a first-year apprentice can assist a qualified tradesperson under direct supervision by:

- hanging and wiring a meter
- hanging a service at the house end in preparation for testing

Refer to Table 1 which provides guidance on the supervision requirements for types of work and activities that apprentices can undertake.

At all times during the term of their apprenticeship, the apprentice shall be under Direct, General or Broad Supervision as defined below and in Table 1 Work Types and Table 2 Plant Types. The goal is for supervision to progressively diminish from direct to broad in the third or fourth year of the apprenticeship dependent on experience gained and the task with the exception of performing “Live Low Voltage work”. Note: Where ‘No’ is indicated in Tables 1, 2 & 3 this means the task is not permitted.

Direct Supervision

The onsite supervising tradesperson shall be in direct visual and audible contact with the apprentice, providing constant instruction and inspection of tasks being performed.

Note: All Live Low Voltage work requires Direct Supervision.

General Supervision

The onsite supervising tradesperson shall make regular face to face contact with the apprentice, delivering progressive instruction and inspection on tasks being performed.

Broad Supervision

The onsite supervising tradesperson shall provide instruction and inspection of tasks being performed by the apprentice.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR COMPETENCIES

There are situations where an apprentice has previously been assessed as competent and/or authorised to undertake certain activities (e.g. Licence to perform high risk work and/or Network Authorisations).

Exemptions are permitted for these activities provided that the licence to perform high risk work and/or Network Authorisations and appropriate refresher training records are current and with Network Operator approval.

SAFE APPROACH DISTANCE – SPECIAL

Apprentices shall not apply the use of Safe Approach Distance – Special.

LIVE LV WORK

Under no circumstances shall any apprentice undertake Live Low Voltage Work until they have successfully completed training in the national competency standard unit Maintain overhead energised low voltage distribution network. All Live Low Voltage work requires Direct supervision.

SAFETY OBSERVER ROLE

Apprentices who are new entrants into the industry and who have not acquired relevant skills and knowledge are not to be used as safety observers in their initial 24 month period.

Apprentices may be utilised, after the initial 24 month period, as a safety observer but only if they have:

- a) Successfully completed training in Maintain overhead energised low voltage distribution network
- b) been trained in rescue and/or escape techniques applicable to the task being performed
- c) been trained in Safe Approach Distances
- d) have an understanding of the task or work practice being observed
- e) an understanding of the functions and movements of plant and equipment.

Under no circumstances shall an apprentice perform, assist or act as a Safety Observer for a live High Voltage work party.

AVAILABILITY

To be considered for availability the Apprentice must have successfully completed training in the national competency standard unit Maintain overhead energised low voltage distribution network and have started the 3rd year of their apprenticeship.

An apprentice can only take on the duties of a second call availability Lineworker and cannot sign on to an Access Permit as a recipient in charge (RIC).

The supervising tradesperson must be able to adequately supervise the apprentice at all times as outlined in Table 1.

ACCESS AUTHORITIES

An apprentice Lineworker cannot be a 'Recipient in Charge' of an Electrical Access Permit.

First Year Apprentice

If working under an access authority the apprentice shall be bracketed on to the Access Permit as an Instructed Person with an authorised Access Permit recipient.

Second - Fourth Year Apprentice

An apprentice can be Authorised as a holder of Receive Access Permits. This means that they can sign onto access permits and work within the bounds of the access permit but shall remain under supervision as outlined in Table 1.

Prior to being authorised, an apprentice shall have successfully completed:

- the first year of the apprenticeship
- Apply Access procedures to work on or near electrical network infrastructure Training.

Post Apprenticeship

Upon successful completion of the Distribution Lineworker Apprenticeship and with approval from the Network Operator the holder can sign on to an Access Authority as a Recipient in Charge.

HIGH VOLTAGE SWITCHING

Third Year Apprentice

On the successful completion of the national competency standard unit (Perform High Voltage field switching operation to a given schedule) the apprentice can be classified as an Operator in Training and can undertake switching of the overhead network (only) and under direct supervision of an authorised operator.

Fourth Year Apprentice

The apprentice can be authorised as a High Voltage (HV) Switching – RSO (Restricted Switching Overhead) operator dependent on the Network Operator Authorisation process after successful completion of the national competency standard unit final assessment. This means they can switch assets as authorised by a Network Operator and issue Access Permits to persons eligible to sign on as a recipient in charge. The apprentice shall be under the general supervision of a HV Operator authorised to a level appropriate to the HV switching being undertaken.

When switching metal clad switchgear, underground network and within zone substations, the apprentice shall be classified as an 'Operator in Training' and must be under the direct supervision of an authorised HV Operator at all times.

TABLE 1 - WORK TYPES

This table provides guidance on the supervision requirements and the activities apprentices can undertake. It has been aligned to the training package as delivered for the Certificate III in ESI – Distribution overhead Qualification.

NOTE: Where years 2 and 3 are split this does not indicate any time period. The undertaking of these tasks shall not commence until the apprentice has successfully completed the related Unit of Competency from the Training Package.

		1 st six months	2 nd six months	Year 2		Year 3		Year 4
General	Yard / Ground work	General	Broad	Broad		Broad		Broad
	Ground work at job site	Direct	General	General		Broad		Broad
	Pole dressing	Direct	General	General		Broad		Broad
	Traffic mgt.	No	General	General		Broad		Broad
Working Aloft	Ladder Work Aloft (Under EAP or Not Commissioned).	Direct	General	General		General		Broad
	EWP Work Aloft ¹ (Under EAP or Not commissioned)	Direct	General	General		General		Broad
	Work on poles carrying energised circuits ^{2, 4}	Direct ²	Direct ²	Direct ³	Direct	Direct		Direct
Earthing	Install SS earthing	Direct	Direct	General		General		Broad
	SWER Earth Maintenance	Direct	Direct	Direct	Direct	General		Broad
Public Lighting	New PL pole Installations.	Direct	Direct	General		General		Broad
	PL Maintenance & Repair (live)	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		Direct
Metering and Servicing	Install / Replace Metering (De-energised)	Direct	Direct	Direct		General		Broad
	Install OH & UG Services (De-energised)	Direct	Direct	General		General		Broad
	Install OH & UG Services (Live)	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		General
	Undertake NST/Polarity Test	No	No	No	Direct	General		Broad
Live LV Work	Live Low Voltage Work	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		Direct
	Make LV Dead	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		Direct
	LV Switching	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		Direct
	Change LV Cross Arm Alive	No	No	No	Direct	Direct		Direct
Safety Observer	Safety Observer	No	No	No		Broad		Broad
HV Operating	HV Operating ⁵	No	No	No		No	Direct	Direct
Tree Clearing	Undertake Vegetation Control (EWP)	No	No	No		Direct		Direct

¹ Must be 18 years of age and hold the relevant licence to perform high risk work, (boom-type elevating work platform operation).

² Only when a distance of at least 1m is maintained below the lowest energised circuit unless Note 4 applies.

³ Only when no contact is made with energised LV conductors or equipment and SAD's are maintained to energised HV conductors

⁴ See FAQs for work under EAP where there is another energised circuit on the same structure

⁵ Network Operator issued HV Operating Authority must be held, or work undertaken in consideration of restrictions outlined under Access Authorities on page 7.

TABLE 2 - PLANT TYPES

During the course of an apprenticeship it is expected that apprentices will have worked across a representative range of plant and equipment, consistently and to industry requirements with supervision ranging from direct to general to broad. They will also, have concurrently attained the relevant underpinning knowledge and skills to support workplace performance.

Type of Work	1 st six Months	2 nd Six Months	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Chainsaw / Demo Saw	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Self-Loading Cable Trailer	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Small Capstan Winch	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Cable Winch	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Truck –mounted crane < 10t	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Forklift	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
EWP	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad
Truck- mounted crane > 10t	No	Direct	General	Broad	Broad

Prior to operation an apprentice must meet all regulatory requirements, age, training and hold the relevant WorkSafe licence to perform high risk work for the following:

- a) Forklift truck operation
- b) Boom-type elevating work platform operation
- c) Vehicle loading Crane > 10mt

(See Recognition of prior competencies on page 6 for further information)

TABLE 3 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Type of Work	1 st six Months	2 nd Six Months	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Can they go on availability? ¹	No	No	No	Yes ¹	Yes ¹
Can they climb new poles and structures (not commissioned)	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they climb commissioned poles and structures- Under EAP	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they work on in-service poles and structures from a ladder/EWP with the LV under EAP, beneath an energised HV circuit maintaining Safe approach distances	No	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they work on in-service poles and structures from a ladder with the HV under EAP, above an energised LV circuit	No	No	No	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they work on HV under EAP on in-service poles and structures from an EWP, above an energised LV circuit	No	Yes ³	Yes ³	Yes ³	Yes ³
Can they work live (LV)	No	No	No Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they be a safety observer - Live LV work? ⁴	No	No	No	Yes ⁴	Yes ⁴
Can they be a safety observer – HV Live Line Work?	No	No	No	No	No
Can they apply the use of Safe Approach Distance - Special	No	No	No	No	No
Can they undertake polarity/NST testing?	No	No	No Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they perform LV switching?	No	No	No Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they supervise contractors?	No	No	No	No	No
Can they perform Traffic Control?	No	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they conduct a Safe to Approach test?	No	No	No Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Can they undertake HV operating? ⁵	No	No	No	No Yes ⁵	Yes ⁵
Can they sign on an Electrical Access Permit? ⁶	Yes ⁶	Yes ⁶	Yes ⁶	Yes ⁶	Yes ⁶
Can they be a Recipient in Charge of an Electrical Access Permit?	No	No	No	No	No

¹ Refer to Availability requirements on page 6

² Refer to Supervision type as required in Table 1

³ Only under the effective supervision of a qualified Lineworker who is an Authorised Recipient and is in the EWP basket with the apprentice

⁴ Refer to Safety Observer requirements on page 6

⁵ Refer to High Voltage Switching requirements on page 7

⁶ Refer to Access Authority requirements on page 7

NOTE: Where years 2 and 3 are split this does not indicate any time period. The undertaking of these tasks shall not commence until the apprentice has successfully completed the related Unit of Competency from the Training Package.