

Vegetation Management Guideline

This guideline has been developed by the Victorian Electricity Supply Industry (VESI) Vegetation Management Committee

In the Victorian
Electricity Supply
Industry

August 2024

DATE	VERSION	AMENDMENT	NAME
September 2014	1	Original	VMC
September 2015	2	 Updated Training and Qualifications Section to include the following requirements: Qualifications New Employee Vegetation Roles Lineworkers HV Live Work Arborist Certificate II – Units of Competence Requirements VESI Competency Assessment / Refresher Training Requirements Updated the heading in Table 4 to align with the Green Book 	VMC
August 2024 3		 Removal of duplication in VESI Skills & training guideline Addition of Vegetation Management worker rolls Updated definition of Arborist Updated SADs to better align with 2023-10 Green Book Addition of Transmission and Uninsulated mobile plant SADs Minor updates for clarity. 	VMC

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1. Introduction

The Victorian Electricity Supply Industry (VESI) has developed this Vegetation Management Guideline to establish industry standards for Vegetation Management workers in the VESI.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to establish the principles applicable to safe vegetation management work for workers working under the control of the Network Operators.

This guideline is intended to:

- provide an agreed standard common to all Victorian Network Operators;
- assist in the safety of Vegetation Management workers and the general public;
- specify the minimum standards required for mobile plant, tools and equipment used in vegetation management work;
- provide the basic technical material necessary for Network Operators and Contractors to develop role specific work procedures.

3. Scope

The scope of this document provides the principles and the responsibilities for workers who undertake and/or manage vegetation work for the Network Operators.

This guideline applies the Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances near live overhead lines when undertaking vegetation management work by utilising:

- Appropriate work methods for clearing vegetation;
- Insulated tools, plant and equipment where practical;
- Uninsulated plant; and
- Climbers and ground workers.

Vegetation management work within the Live Cutting Zone, or at distances less than Vegetation Clearances and Safe Approach Distances detailed within this guideline shall only be undertaken utilising appropriate live work techniques or under an Electrical Access Permit.

4. Training & Qualifications

The following documents and this Guideline outline the minimum training requirements for Vegetation Management work:

- VESI Skills & Training Guideline
- VESI Vegetation Skills and Training Matrix
- VESI Skills and Training Matrix
- Supervision Guideline for Trainee Vegetation Management Workers

The minimum requirements outlined in these documents shall apply to Network Operators and their Contractors. All mandatory VESI competencies shall be in place prior to work being performed unless specified by this Guideline or the Network Operator.

For role requirements, including the applicable qualification and elective competency standard units, refer to the VESI Vegetation Skills and Training Matrix. Where a person performs multiple roles (e.g. Tree Climber, Cutter working from EWP) they shall undertake the mandatory training for each of those roles. For roles not identified in the Matrix or where there is a change required to an existing role, training requirements should be established in consultation with the Network Operator. These requirements may be different for each Network Operator.

The refresher training cycle will commence on successful completion of the initial training.

4.1. Vegetation Roles

Arborist	Engaged in the VESI to assess hazardous trees. Arborists shall meet the qualification requirements as stated in the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations:		
	Suitably qualified arborist means an arborist who has:		
	(a) as a minimum, the qualification of National Certificate III in Arboriculture including "Perform a ground-based tree defect evaluation" unit of competency, or an equivalent qualification; and		
	(b) at least 3 years of field experience in assessing trees		
Assessor	Engaged in assessing and scoping vegetation near live electrical apparatus. Determine cutting requirements to confirm compliance for regetation near live electrical apparatus.		
Chipper Operator	Engaged in operating a wood chipper to process trees and branches that have been cut from around powerlines.		
Cutter working at Ground Level	Engaged in vegetation ground work including but not limited to activities such as herbicide application and chainsaw work.		
Cutter working from EWP	Engaged in vegetation control work from an Elevated Work Platform (EWP).		
Herbicide Worker	Engaged in vegetation control work by applying herbicide at ground level.		
Ground Based Plant Operator	Engaged in operating plant for the purpose of controlling vegetation from the ground with no risk of breaching SAD's, such as a tractor slasher or forest mower/mulcher.		
Mechanical Tree Trimmer / Hedger	Engaged in vegetation control work using specialised plant to cut vegetation above ground in the vicinity of live electrical apparatus. E.g., mechanical tree trimmer or boom mounted hedger.		
Tree Climber	Engaged in vegetation control work from within a tree.		

4.2. Trainees

A trainee is a worker with minimal or no VESI experience in vegetation control who will be gaining practical industry experience under a training plan while working towards obtaining Certificate II in ESI Powerline Vegetation Control.

Trainees are workers who are operating under a training plan issued by an RTO to obtain the Certificate II in ESI Powerline Vegetation Control (or additional elective competency standard units if changing roles).

It is anticipated that the qualification requirements would be completed within 12 months of enrolment.

All mandatory VESI training shall be completed as per the VESI Vegetation Skills and Training Matrix prior to undertaking work.

The document Supervision Guideline for Trainee Vegetation Management Workers has been developed for Trainees and should be followed when completing the Qualification or electives.

4.3. Lineworkers

Lineworkers who undertake vegetation works under a vegetation contract who have been approved by the Network Operator are required to have the unit of competence (or previous equivalents as agreed with the Network Operator) in either:

- UETDRVC003 Control vegetation for powerline work (UET30621- Certificate III in ESI -Distribution Overhead) and
- AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws or
- UETDRVC004 Control vegetation in the vicinity of live electrical apparatus from an elevated work platform (UET20321- Certificate II in ESI - Powerline Vegetation Control)

4.4. HV Live Work

Workers engaged in HV Live Work tree cutting tasks shall have undertaken initial training provided by a Registered Training Organisation in either:

- **UETDRDO003** Maintain energised high voltage distribution overhead electrical apparatus (glove and barrier) **or**
- UETDRDO004 Maintain energised high voltage distribution overhead electrical apparatus (stick) or
- ¹VESI Limited High Voltage Live Work

Note: HV Live Work Lineworkers shall also have attained the national competency standard unit Operate and Maintain Chainsaws AHCMOM213.

Only trained HV Live Lineworkers with current HV Live Work competency using the appropriate HV Live Work procedures are permitted to clear vegetation from an EWP positioned over the top of live HV conductors.

A HV Live Work Lineworker who does not have the required vegetation competency/ies as listed in clause 4.3, may cut vegetation clear of power lines for a qualified vegetation worker to complete the required cutting, whilst maintaining Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances.

Vegetation Management Guideline

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¹ Workers trained in VESI Limited High Voltage Live Work – Vegetation Control can only be used with the prior approval of the relevant Network Operator.

5. General Principles

Prior to commencing vegetation management work, a documented Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) and site risk assessment shall be in place to record potential hazards, assess the risk and determine controls associated with work practices, the work environment, the use of materials, plant, tools and equipment. Appropriate cutting techniques should be used when conducting vegetation management works in accordance with the Network Operator and Contractors organisational procedures. In the event of a variation between the Network Operator and Contractors organisational procedures, the Network Operators procedures shall take precedence.

Vegetation management work shall not be performed near live overhead lines when another activity that could compromise the safety of the work team is being carried out.

Documented work procedures shall be in place to ensure the safety of vegetation management workers and the general public.

The work procedures shall include but not be limited to:

- Description of vegetation management principles and requirements;
- Instructions on caring for the tools and equipment;
- Testing requirements for plant, insulated tools and equipment;
- A set of vegetation management work techniques;
- The Safe Approach Distances applicable to the worker and the voltage;
- The minimum Vegetation Clearances to all voltages; and
- Emergency procedures.

6. Hazards

Hazards that that should be considered when planning and undertaking work include but are not limited to:

- Working near or in the vicinity of live overhead power lines;
- Working from heights;
- Unexpected movement of the worker, mobile plant or the vegetation relative to the electrical apparatus;
- Unexpected lateral movement (sway) of the conductors due to wind, particularly in gusty conditions (see Section 9 Conductor Sag and Sway
- Unexpected drop in height (sag) of the conductors due to temperature rise associated with changes in electrical load, solar radiation or reduced cooling under light or still wind (see Section 9 Conductor Sag and Sway;
- The integrity of the adjacent structures, conductor spans and of any insulation on live conductors;
- Site conditions (stability of equipment and footing), vehicular traffic, pedestrians and access to the site;
- Environmental conditions such as wind, rain, fog etc. (see Section 7.4 Weather Conditions below); and
- Direct or indirect contact with live overhead lines via vegetation or tools and equipment.

7. Controlling Hazardous Situations

Measures shall be taken by vegetation workers to control the risks from hazardous situations in accordance with organisational procedures. Control measures shall be monitored, and their effectiveness reviewed for the duration of the works.

This may be achieved by, but not limited to one or more of the following methods:

- Utilisation of a Safety Observer;
- The use of fully insulated mobile plant, tools and equipment;
- Appropriate fall arrest equipment;
- Increase the minimum distances required to safely carry out the vegetation management work including allowance for unexpected conductor movement;
- The use of suitable personal protective equipment as per Network Operator requirements;
- A safe means and method of controlling the movement of limbs being cut;
- Positioning the mobile plant and persons such that Safe Approach Distances can be maintained in all circumstances;
- Ensure that all members of the public are kept clear of the work site while vegetation management work is in progress;
- Control of pedestrians and traffic management;
- Where required, the Suppression of the Auto Reclose system;
- The use of high voltage live working techniques; and
- Utilising an Electrical Access Permit, where required, as per Network Operators procedures.

7.1. Utilising HV Live Work Methods and Electrical Access Permits

Vegetation management work which is required to be performed on vegetation which has any part within or likely to come within, the vegetation clearances of live exposed high voltage overhead lines shall be undertaken by approved HV Live Work Methods or under Electrical Access Permit.

7.2. Suppression of Auto-Reclose

Where vegetation management work is being performed 'Near' live high voltage apparatus consideration shall be given to suppressing the auto-reclose function of the HV circuit. The auto-reclose function shall be identified as suppressed/disabled. The suppression of auto-reclose shall be undertaken in accordance with Network Operator procedures.

7.3. Wearing of Metallic Objects

Metallic objects such as neck chains, earrings and other body adornments, rings, watches and bracelets should not be worn while carrying out vegetation management work near live overhead lines.

7.4. Weather Conditions

Vegetation management work near live overhead lines should not proceed in the event of the following weather conditions unless a site risk assessment is completed and suitable controls can be put in place and maintained:

- An electrical storm is observed in the vicinity of the worksite;
- Any significant rain (beyond intermittent spotting), mist, fog, snow or sleet unless using methods and equipment specifically designed and tested as being able to operate whilst wet;

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- Wind velocities that may result in unexpected movement of conductors, mobile plant or vegetation, sufficient to breach Safe Approach Distances;
- Excessive wind velocities such that work cannot be carried out safely; and
- Lighting is not adequate.

7.5. Safety Observer

A Safety Observer(s) shall be appointed where any, person, mobile plant, EWP or vegetation is in a position where any part could accidentally come within the Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances.

Depending on the position and complexity of the work, more than one Safety Observer may be required however at least one Safety Observer must be positioned at ground level at all times.

The Safety Observer(s) shall:

- Be specifically instructed in the workplace hazards applicable;
- Ensure that all persons, tools, plant and equipment remain outside the specified minimum Safe Approach Distance;
- Be positioned at a suitable location to effectively observe the work being performed;
- Not observe more than one vegetation management work activity at any time;
- Have the authority to temporarily suspend the work at any time;
- Maintain effective and immediate communication with the work team at all times;
- Not perform any other task while acting as a Safety Observer, which includes the passing of tools directly to the person performing the work;
- Suspend all work in the event of having to leave the site or significantly change position until
 the Safety Observer(s) has returned/reached new location or has been replaced;
- Be trained and deemed competent of performing a rescue relevant to the role being undertaken;
- Understand the task being observed; and
- Understand the functions and movements of plant and equipment or tree climbing operations.

The Safety Observer's role may be rotated between members of the work team e.g. to reduce fatigue. When this occurs it shall be communicated such that all members of the work party are aware at all times who is performing the role of the Safety Observer(s).

8. Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances

The Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances for Instructed or Authorised Persons in the following tables shall be applied for all workers who undertake vegetation works.

The Vegetation Clearances described in this document means the minimum separation in air that should be maintained between vegetation and live electrical apparatus when performing vegetation management work.

Any safe system of work employed to undertake vegetation clearing near overhead power lines shall result in the achievement of both the Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearance which includes but is not limited to:

- Cut, pruned or falling vegetation;
- Tools and equipment;
- Persons; and
- Mobile plant.

The Safe Approach Distance for persons and mobile plant are specified for ideal environmental, weather and working conditions. Allowances must be made for the effects of ambient temperature, conductor temperature, wind and other environmental influences on overhead power line sag and sway while vegetation management work is in progress.

Vegetation must be cut, felled or pruned using controlled movements. The vegetation may be controlled using ropes or other suitable methods.

Tools and equipment are considered part of the person in applying Safe Approach Distances.

8.1. Utilising Insulated Mobile Plant, Tools and Equipment

Instructed and authorised persons performing vegetation management work near live overhead power lines using insulated mobile plant, shall maintain the distances listed in Table 1.

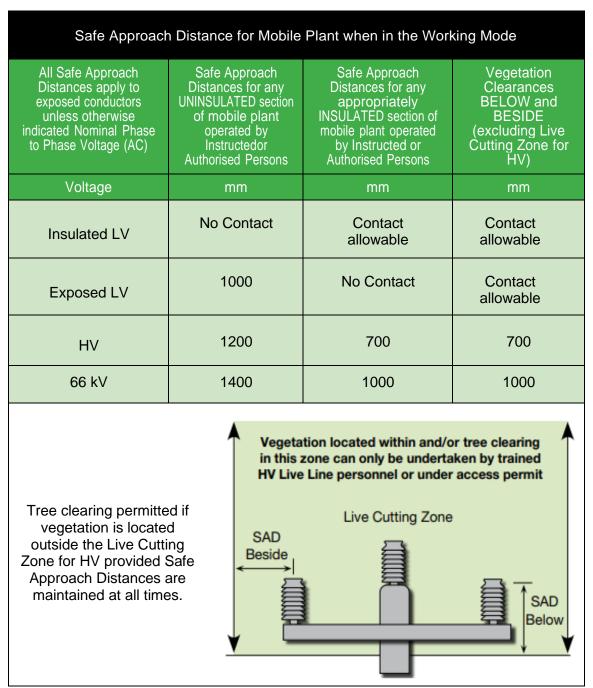
Table 1 - Clearances For Insulated Mobile Plant

Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances for Instructed and Authorised Persons utilising insulated EWP, tools, plant and equipment					
Nominal Phase	Insulated Mobile	Instructed &	Vegetation Clearance		
to Phase AC Voltage kV	Plant mm	Authorised Persons mm	Below (excluding Live Cutting Zone for HV) mm	Beside (excluding Live Cutting Zone for HV) mm	
LV	Contact Allowable	Physical Clearance	No Clearance required		
11	700	700	100	400	
22	700	700	150	400	
33	700	700	200	400	
66	1000	1000	400	700	
Covered aerial HV up to 33kV	700	700	100	100	
Vegetation located within and/or tree clearing in this zone can only be undertaken by trained HV Live Line personnel or under access permit					
Tree clearing permitted if vegetation is located outside the Live Cutting Zone for HV provided Safe Approach Distances are maintained at all times.			SAD Beside	g Zone	

8.2. Utilising Uninsulated Mobile Plant

Vegetation management workers performing vegetation management work utilising uninsulated mobile plant near live overhead power lines shall be instructed or authorised persons and maintain the distances listed in Table 2.

Table 2 - Clearances for Uninsulated Mobile Plant



8.3. Climbers and Ground Workers

Vegetation management workers performing vegetation management work from either within a tree or from the ground near live overhead power lines shall be instructed or authorised persons and maintain the distances listed in Table 3.

Climbing and ground based clearing methods may require additional clearances and controls to ensure a safe system of work is maintained. Clearing of vegetation adjacent to overhead power lines using climbing or ground-based methods must comply with any additional specific Network Operator procedures.

Procedures shall be in place to ensure that any climbing and ground based clearing methods provide at least the appropriate Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances at all times.

Climbers shall not climb any vegetation where any part of it is within or may move within the Vegetation Clearances noted in Table 3 during the work activity. Climbers shall not position themselves so that they could fall or swing into the conductors or in any way breach the distances listed in Table 3.

Table 3 - Clearances When Climbing Or Working From Ground

Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances for Instructed and Authorised Persons performing vegetation works when climbing or working from ground level					
Nominal Phase to Phase AC Voltage	Instructed & Authorised PersonsPersonal Clearances (includes uninsulated tool or extension)	Vegetation Clearances BELOW and BESIDE (excluding Live Cutting Zone for HV)	Vegetation Clearances Above / Overhanging (excluding Live Cutting Zone for HV)		
kV	mm	mm	mm		
Insulated LV	200	Contact allowed	Contact allowed		
Exposed LV	1000 (no work above)	Contact allowed	3000¹		
11	1200	700	Vegetation		
22	1200	700	management work		
33	1200	700	not permitted		
66	1400	1000			
Tree clearing perr vegetation is loc outside the Live (Zone for HV pro Safe Approad Distances at maintained at all ¹ Provided the mod of limbs being cut controlled	in this z HV Live Live SAD Beside times.	ion located within and/or one can only be undertal Line personnel or under Live Cutting Zone	ken by trained		

8.4. Transmission Safe Approach Distances

Vegetation management workers performing vegetation management work utilising mobile plant, from within a tree or from the ground near live overhead transmission lines shall be instructed or authorised persons and maintain the distances listed in Table 4.

Table 4 – Clearances for Vegetation Workers utilising insulated or uninsulated mobile plant, when climbing or working from ground level - Transmission

Nominal Phase to Phase Voltage kV	Mobile Plant	Vegetation Workers mm	Vegetation Clearance Below and Beside mm	Vegetation Clearance Above / Overhanging
66 (on tower structures)	2000	2000	2000	
110 – 132	4000	4000	3000	Vegetation
220	4600	4600	4000	management work not
275	5000	5000	5000	permitted
330	6000	6000	6000	
500	6400	6400	6000	

9. Conductor Sag and Sway

The Safe Approach Distances and Vegetation Clearances detailed in this Guideline make no provision for conductor movement due to wind or change in conductor temperature. Unexpected conductor movement may occur under moderate wind or changes in conductor heating or cooling factors.

Appropriate allowance for sag and sway changes must be applied when working adjacent to power lines towards the centre of the span to ensure that appropriate Safe Approach Distances are maintained at all times (Figures 1-3). Factors regarding conductor movement to consider include:

- Positioning of plant and persons and the method of cutting of limbs;
- Sway Conductors can move unexpectedly due to causes such as wind, fault currents or impacts. Under fault conditions movement may be sudden and extreme, in excess of the full sag at everyday temperatures;
- Sag Conductors may move downwards due to possible causes including, conductor temperature rise, wind, fault currents and impacts; and
- The type of construction (for example suspension insulators allow more conductor movement than post insulators).

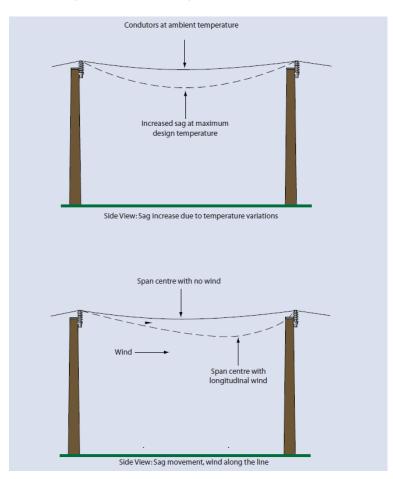


Figure 1 – Conductor Sag and Sway (Side Elevation)

Figure 2 - Conductor Sag and Sway (Plan View)

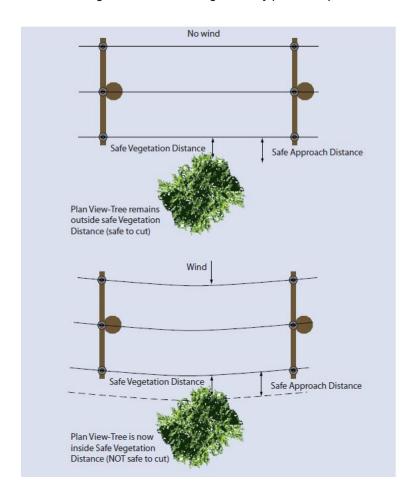
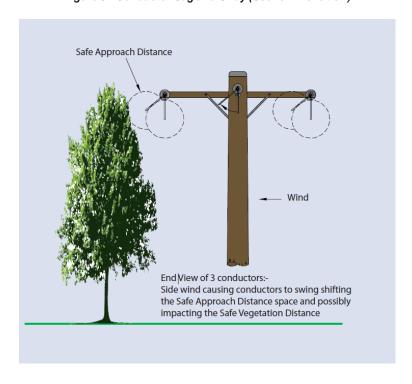


Figure 3 – Conductor Sag and Sway (Section Elevation)



10. Tools and Equipment

Care and maintenance of tools and equipment is essential for safe vegetation management work near live overhead lines. This is especially the case for insulated tools and equipment.

All tools and equipment used for vegetation management work shall be inspected, maintained and tested at appropriate intervals and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and relevant Standards. Appropriate records shall be kept in accordance with legislative requirements.

All insulated tools and equipment including hydraulic saws used for vegetation management work shall be designed, tested and approved specifically for work near live overhead lines. They shall be rated for the voltage of the relevant overhead lines and shall meet Australian Standards AS5804.1, AS5804.2 and AS5804.3.

All insulated hydraulic saws² and attached hoses shall be electrically tested at intervals not exceeding six months. The appropriate electrical insulation test shall be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and Australian Standards AS5804.2 and AS5804.3.

All insulated tools and equipment should be maintained in a clean and dry condition, should not be laid directly on the ground and be visually inspected and cleaned before use. They shall be stored and transported in a way that shall ensure the equipment is not exposed to excess moisture, dust, abrasion and other deteriorating effects.

Any tool or equipment that appears to be defective shall be labelled defective, and quarantined from service for further inspection, testing, repair or replacement.

11. Ladders

Only ladders with insulating properties shall be used to provide access for vegetation management workers to their work position near live overhead power lines as per the Green Book and Network Operators requirements. Metal ladders or metal reinforced ladders shall not be used.

12. Insulated Mobile Plant

Insulated mobile plant used for vegetation management work shall pass periodic routine electrical tests in accordance with AS 1418 and shall be maintained in accordance with AS 2550.10.

The insulated sections of mobile plant shall be maintained in a clean condition.

13. Communications

The vegetation management work team shall ensure a method of communication with the Network Operator is available at all times.

The work team shall establish and maintain effective communication between the work team members to ensure the safety of the team.

A procedure / protocol shall be in place for contacting emergency services should an accident or incident occur.

14. Public Safety

The Network Operator or Contractor shall ensure that all members of the public are kept clear of the work site while vegetation management work is in progress.

15. Incident reporting

For the purpose of this Guideline, an incident is defined as any of the following events:

² Not to be treated as an insulated tool. Vegetation Management Guideline

- An electric shock or other serious injury received by any member of the work team or member of the public;
- A flashover at, or close to, the worksite for any reason;
- Damage to the network or an interruption to supply;
- Complete or partial breakdown of any insulating tool or equipment irrespective of whether flashover occurred;
- The electrical or mechanical failures of any insulating tool, which did, or could have the potential to, cause an accident; and
- Any occurrence which is life threatening or has the potential to cause personal injury or damage to property.

The Contractor shall have in place documented procedures for responding to incidents. These procedures shall address, as appropriate, the following items:

- The immediate notification of the Network owner;
- The rescue of injured persons or those at risk;
- The immediate first aid and medical needs of any injured person and the safety of other persons at the worksite;
- Investigation and reporting requirements to determine the cause of the incident and the implementation of appropriate remedial measures; and
- Notification of all parties required under relevant regulations and industry agreements.

16. Continuous Improvement

Suggestions for improvement to this guideline can be submitted via the <u>Contact Us</u>³ link on the VESI Skills and Training webpage. Suggestions will be considered by the Vegetation working group for incorporation.

Any changes to this document can only be made by consensus agreement between the Network Operators.

http://www.vesi.com.au/index.php/contact-us
 Vegetation Management Guideline
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 UNCONTROLLED WHEN PRINTED

17. Definitions

Competent Means having the skills, knowledge and attributes a person

needs to complete a task

Contractor Contractor or sub-contractor engaged through contractual

arrangements with a Network Operator

Insulated Means separated from adjoining conducting material by a non-

conducting substance which provides resistance to the passage of current, or to disruptive discharges through or over

the surface of the substance at the operating voltage, and to mitigate the danger of shock or injurious leakage of current

Elevating Work Platform

(EWP)

Means an elevating work platform that complies with the design and electrical testing requirements of AS 1418.10

Insulated Plant, Tools and Equipment

Means plant, tools and equipment specifically designed, approved, tested and maintained for use on or near live electrical apparatus. They shall be used only on or near electrical apparatus, which is energised at a voltage equal to or less than the voltage rating marked on the plant, tool or

equipment.

Near Means a situation where there is a reasonable possibility of a

person either directly or through any conducting medium (e.g. via mobile plant) coming within the relevant Safe Approach

Distances

Personnel Employees, Contractors and Sub-contractors of a Network

Operator.

Refresher training Training to compensate for or prevent deterioration in a

previously achieved standard of performance. Usually

undertaken at a set frequency.

Units of competency Define the skills and knowledge to operate effectively and how

they need to be applied to perform effectively in a workplace

context

Vegetation Means any living or non-living flora or any part of that flora.

Vegetation Clearance Means the minimum separation in air that shall be maintained

between vegetation and live electrical apparatus when

performing vegetation management work.

Vegetation Management

Work

Means the pruning, cutting, trimming or felling of, or application of herbicides to, vegetation and the assisting to prune, cut, trim or fell, or apply herbicides to, vegetation, where any part of the vegetation is or may come within, or the work requires any person, tool, equipment or vehicle to come within, the Safe

Approach Distance for ordinary persons for live overhead lines.

Vegetation Management Worker

Means an employee whose qualifications, experience and ongoing training and assessment demonstrate competency in the performance of vegetation management work near live

overhead lines

Vicinity

Means a situation where it is unlikely that a person will, either directly or through any conducting medium (e.g. via mobile plant), come within the relevant Safe Approach Distances

18. References

- VESI Vegetation Skills and Training Matrix
- Supervision Guideline for Trainee Vegetation Management Workers
- ENA DOC 023-2009 ENA Guidelines for Safe Vegetation Management Work Near Live Overhead Lines
- The Green Book Electrical Safety Rules for the VESI Distribution Networks