Downed Power Lines and Vehicle Safety - Quiz Answer Key

What is the first thing you should do if your vehicle comes into contact with power lines?

a. Stay inside the vehicle and call for help
b. Run as far away as you can
c. Get out to inspect the damage
d. Cautiously exit the vehicle and call help

Explanation: Although it may seem counterintuitive, staying inside the vehicle is the safest course of action. Getting out while the lines are still energized (live) could cause the driver or a passenger to become path to ground for the electricity, resulting in electrocution or a severe shock.

In crashes involving power lines, it is safe to exit the vehicle if the lines aren't visibly sparking or smoking.

a. True
b. False

Explanation: Always assume that all downed lines are live. Unless there is smoke or fire, you should not exit the vehicle under any circumstance until after the power company has arrived and certified that the lines are de-energized. Note, first responders will alert the power company when you dial 911.

The only situation in which you should consider leaving a vehicle that is in contact with downed power lines is:

a. After you call for help
b. When the airbags deploy
c. If the vehicle catches on fire or begins to smoke
d. When a bystander arrives to help you get out

Explanation: It is only permissible to exit the vehicle if you notice smoke or fire. Otherwise, remain inside, call 911 and wait until the power company arrives to de-energize the lines.

While driving home one evening, Kodi swerves to avoid hitting an animal and crashes into a utility pole. Luckily, she is not injured, but the car is severely damaged. Where should Kodi wait for help?

a. On the side of the road
b. At a nearby house
c. In an open field across the street
d. Inside the vehicle

Explanation: It is safest to remain inside the vehicle, even if it looks like there is a clear path to exit.

If you happen to witness a crash involving power lines and a vehicle, you should do all but <u>ONE</u> of the following:

a. Stay far away and call 911
b. Consider the power lines to be energized and dangerous

c. Tell the passengers to remain inside until help arrives
d. Approach the vehicle to help

Explanation: Bystanders can get electrocuted or severely shocked if they move too close to a vehicle that has come into contact with power lines. It is safest to call for help from a safe distance and urge others to stay back as well. Even if the driver appears to be in distress, getting too close is dangerous.

If you must exit the vehicle after an accident with power lines, what are the proper steps to take?

a. Open your door, step out and move away with big steps to avoid touching power lines
b. Exit through a door where there are no power lines visible
c. Open the door, step out and then move away with very small steps
d. Open the door, jump out with both feet together and without touching the car and ground at the same time and then move away from the vehicle, using either the shuffle or bunny hop technique

Explanation: If you must exit the vehicle, it is critical to jump out with both feet together and without touching the car and ground at the same time. This reduces the likelihood of touch potential, where electricity might flow from an energized object (the car) to the ground, using you as a conduit. Once you land with both feet together, either shuffle or bunny hop as far away as you can (35 feet at a minimum). Keeping your feet close together reduces the likelihood of step potential, where the electricity from the energized ground might flow through one foot and out the other. The further your feet are apart, the greater your chances of getting shocked.

You can only get electrocuted by physically touching power lines.

a. True
b. False

Explanation: False. Specifically, in the vehicle scenario, downed lines can cause both the car and surrounding area to become energized. One wrong move and you can get electrocuted or severely shocked without ever touching a line. This is why it's critically important to remain inside the vehicle until the power company arrives, even if you can't see the power lines or they appear to be dead. Only when the power company clears the scene and certifies that the lines are de-energized is the potential for serious or even fatal injury removed.

Assuming the vehicle does not begin to smoke or catch fire, it is only safe to exit when_____ certifies that both the lines and surrounding area are de-energized.

a. The power company
b. A passing motorist
c. Mom or dad
d. A 911 operator

Explanation: In any crash involving vehicles and power lines, the local power company will arrive on scene after you call 911. These are the only people who can clear the scene and certify that the lines are de-energized. Only then is it safe to exit the vehicle.

Why is it critical to shuffle or bunny hop away from the vehicle if you must exit?

a. It's the quickest way out
b. Keeping your feet together reduces the potential for electrocution
c. It's easier to avoid downed lines when you aren't taking large steps
d. It de-energizes the ground

Explanation: Always assuming the ground is energized, there is a higher chance for electrocution or a severe shock if your feet are further apart. This is because electricity can enter through one foot and exit out the other, utilizing your body as the conduit. Shuffling or hopping keeps your feet close together, making it more difficult for the electrical current to pass through your body.

You are driving one day and witness a crash in which the driver in front of you collides with a utility pole, bringing down power lines. You stop to help. What should you do?

a. Attempt to clear the power lines with a stick
b. Shuffle or bunny hop to the car to check on the occupants
c. Stay far away, but call for help
d. Run to the vehicle and help the passengers exit

Explanation: In any crash involving a vehicle and power lines, it is essential that bystanders do not approach the impacted vehicle. Getting too close can result in electrocution or a severe shock. Those inside the vehicle should also roll down their windows and instruct bystanders to stay away, as first inclination is often to help.