Office of the Technical Regulator

Powerline clearance requirements and consequences of non-compliance

Electricity Infrastructure Advisory Note

Issued April 2026

This advisory note is for builders, building designers, project managers and developers planning or constructing new buildings in South Australia.

Why is this important?

As part of the development approval process, proponents must sign the Electricity Infrastructure Declaration under Clause 6, Schedule 8 of the ***Planning, Development and Infrastructure (General) Regulations 2017.***

By signing the declaration, the proponent is legally confirming that the proposed building complies with the ***Electricity Act 1996*** (Act) requirements relating to safe clearances from electrical infrastructure.

Signing without carefully considering nearby electrical infrastructure may expose proponents to major financial, safety and legal risk.

Ignoring electricity infrastructure during the design process is one of the most expensive mistakes a proponent can make. It can lead to tens of thousands of dollars in remediation, months of delays and risk of safety incidents. Early assessment protects your workers and clients.

Common issues

Some proponents sign the declaration without assessing existing electricity infrastructure near the proposed building. This often results in buildings encroaching into minimum electrical clearances, which can lead to significant project delays and unplanned costs.

Key risks to proponents

Non compliant buildings

If a building is constructed too close to electricity infrastructure, the building may be deemed non-compliant under the Act, and the proponent may have committed an offence under the Act. For guidance on building safely near electrical infrastructure, refer to Building safely near powerlines.

Major unplanned costs

Once non-compliance is identified, remediation costs are not borne by the network operator and are typically borne by the developer. Typical remediation includes redesigning the building layout, insulating, undergrounding or relocating electricity infrastructure. These costs can be significant and are avoidable if clearances are addressed early.

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Project delays

Electrical infrastructure augmentation works require network assessment and design approval, it can often take weeks or months.

This regularly results in delayed construction schedules and client dissatisfaction.

Safety risks

Buildings constructed too close to electricity infrastructure create ongoing hazards due to potential unsafe approach distances for trades during construction, elevated risk during maintenance or future renovations, and risk to occupants, homeowners, and future contractors. These risks extend well beyond handover of the property.

SafeWork SA involvement

Where unsafe distances are identified, SafeWork SA may become involved. In some circumstances, this may result in stop work notices and investigation. In serious cases, enforcement action may target both companies and individuals.

Legal responsibility

Signing the Electricity Infrastructure Declaration is not a formality and does not shift responsibility to the electricity distributor or local council. The person signing the form is taking responsibility for compliance.

Key considerations

Before signing the declaration, proponents should identify all electricity infrastructure locations on and adjoining the site, check required minimum clearance distances, and factor clearances into the building footprint and elevations.

Identifying powerline voltage

Proponents should confirm the voltage level of all nearby electricity infrastructure before finalising building design. Voltage level information may be obtained through the Location SA Viewer and Look-up Live ArcGIS Web Application.

Where voltage cannot be confidently determined from mapping alone, advice should be sought from the Office of the Technical Regulator.

Clearances

Where clearances are tight, ensure to engage early (prior to construction) with the Office of the Technical Regulator.

Critical planning

When in doubt, do not assume compliance, instead seek clarification prior to lodgement. Treat electricity infrastructure as a critical planning constraint, not an afterthought.

Design compliance safety considerations

Compliance with electrical clearance requirements must be achieved, not only for the finished building, also throughout construction and future maintenance activities. Temporary works, such as scaffolding, are subject to the same legislated clearance distances as permanent structures. People and machinery must be able to maintain safe approach distances at all times.

These requirements should be considered during design to ensure the building can be safely constructed, accessed and maintained without encroaching into prescribed electrical clearances. For guidance on safe work practices near electrical infrastructure, refer to Working safely near overhead powerlines.

Contact the Office of the Technical Regulator for more information

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