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## Dealing with downed power lines

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When a hurricane or a near-hurricane comes through our metro area, the newspapers predictably print stories of people who survived the storm but killed themselves by coming in contact with downed power lines after the storm.

With the goal of saving your life, I offer some basic facts you need to know about power lines and how to deal with them. Power poles are shared by utility, cable, and telephone companies. A downed electrical line can energize the other lines as well. Even non-conductive materials such as pieces of wood can become a path for electricity. Metal security fences can become electrified fences, creating a death trap if you come in

contact with them.

The basic rule is: Stay away from downed power lines. Don't try to move them out of your way. If you're driving, don't try to drive around them during or immediately following a hurricane. Don't drive over the lines because if your car makes contact, it can become energized. In such a case, stay in your car, roll your window down to call for help or use your cell phone to dial 911.

If the car makes contact with a downed power line and catches on fire, the way you exit the car will determine whether you live to tell about it. Open the car's door and stand on the floorboard of the car. Then jump away from the vehicle with both feet together, landing as far as possible from the car. Don't hang on to any part of the car during the jump, including the car handle.

You may have noticed that after the hurricane passes through your area, you will see streets covered with tree branches and litter.

Power lines have a way of getting entangled with these branches, becoming a serious hazard for the person trimming the branches with a chainsaw.

Litter debris — such as a lawn chain, a piece of metal siding or a ladder — can present hidden dangers. Before you do any yard cleanup, take a thorough look at your surroundings. As a safety precaution, have someone with you so that if you come in contact with energized power lines, that person can call for help.

Power lines on the street or in your yard can be killers. Use common sense to survive the storm and that tricky period after the storm.

For more information, call 305-378-4011 or go to <[www.kcwiremasters.com](http://www.kcwiremasters.com)>