

PUBLIC SAFETY MESSAGE FROM TORONTO HYDRO



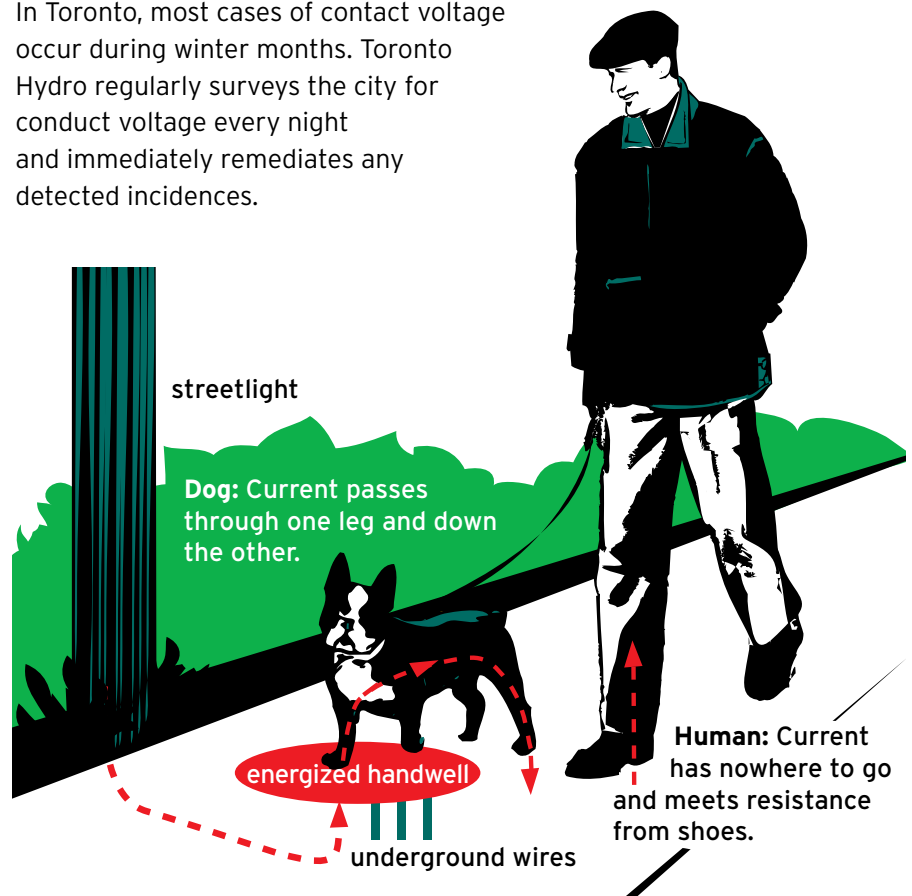
Here are some ways to protect you and your pet:

- 1) Walk in green area or park as much as possible to avoid stepping on handwells and other electrical equipment.
- 2) If you're walking on the street, walk as close to the storefront as possible to steer clear of streetlighting equipment including handwells.
- 3) Always walk your pet on a leash so you can direct the animal around electrical equipment. Avoid tying your leash to streetlighting poles or near handwells
- 4) Use a leash that's made of non-conductive material, preferably nylon. Try to keep your leash as dry as possible.

WHAT IS CONTACT VOLTAGE?

Contact voltage is electricity that may be present on the surface of outdoor structures like street lighting equipment, street signs and other energized fixtures, posing a serious shock hazard. If street equipment such as a handwell (small metal plate covering underground wiring for streetlights) becomes energized, pedestrians and their pets may encounter situations of contact voltage.

In Toronto, most cases of contact voltage occur during winter months. Toronto Hydro regularly surveys the city for conduct voltage every night and immediately remediates any detected incidences.



HOW DO YOU AVOID IT?

The best way to avoid contact voltage is to exercise caution while walking. Avoid electrical equipment such as handwells on the sidewalk and step around metal covers; this includes watching where your pets and children are walking. Generally handwells are found close to streetlight poles but may be hidden by snow.

CONTACT VOLTAGE MYTHS

Myth: Dog boots will protect my pets

Although dog boots provide protection from snow, ice and road salt, there is no research to indicate that they safeguard pets from contact voltage. In fact, wet boots may increase conductivity and the risk of electric shock. Similarly, humans walking with wet boots are also at an increased risk. The best defence is to avoid any electrical equipment and step around metal covers. This includes watching where your pets and children are walking.

Myth: Contact voltage is only dangerous to dogs

Dogs are at a higher risk because they walk with two paws on the ground at all times. This provides a better path for electricity to travel (please see diagram). This danger is intensified as dogs usually walk with wet and exposed paws. That said, contact voltage may even pose a risk to humans. The best defence is to avoid any electrical equipment and step around metal covers.

This includes watching where your pets and children are walking and keeping your dog on a leash. For more information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones from electrical hazards, please visit www.torontohydro.com/safety.

Myth: Contact voltage is only present in "Downtown" Toronto

While most of the electrical infrastructure in the downtown area is aging, contact voltage can be present anywhere electrical equipment and metal come into contact. For this reason, Toronto Hydro is committed to scanning the entire city on an ongoing basis as part of our maintenance and prevention strategy.

IF YOU COME ACROSS IT - STOP, CLEAR AND CALL!

Contact voltage is a serious issue facing Torontonians. It's an intermittent problem that affects the city's streetscape. Pets are most likely to encounter this hazard. Toronto Hydro is committed to public safety and has developed a course of action for emergency situations involving contact voltage.

If you suspect that you or someone else has experienced an electric shock, **Stop, Clear and Call.**



Stop!

If you come across an instance of contact voltage, your pet may freeze and collapse. Animals have reportedly suffered from seizures and muscle contractions. In severe cases, some animals experience respiratory distress or failure.

Before you act, assess the situation for existing hazards. It may be your first instinct to grab a person or pet in distress, but this may pass the electric current to you, rendering you both incapable of seeking help.

Clear!

It is important to move a safe distance away from areas of contact voltage. Ensure pedestrians stay clear of the area. Most recipients of electric shock caused by contact voltage are pets.

If your pet is incapacitated, **do not touch the animal directly as you may also receive an electric shock.** If you have a dry and non-conductive leash, remove your pet from the hazard by pulling the leash or use another non-conductive object.

Call!

As with any emergency, call 911 for immediate assistance. Toronto Emergency Services are trained to deal with electric shock and will notify Toronto Hydro to remediate the problem and make the equipment safe. You are also advised to call the Contact Voltage Hotline to report the incident at 416-222-3773.

For more information go to:
www.torontohydro.com/SAFETY

To report a suspected instance of contact voltage call 416.222.3773

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