

# **This story could save your life: What to do when cars and power lines collide**

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**ALTON –** When a garbage truck snagged a live power line and pulled it to the ground during a traffic incident Wednesday, the driver stayed in the vehicle, but he was not exactly trapped.

Ameren Illinois Communications Executive Brian Bretsch said that driver did the correct thing by staying inside the truck. In fact, Bretsch said anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation involving a downed wire and a car crash should stay

within the vehicle and call authorities immediately. And while this may seem like an uncommon “worst case scenario,” Bretsch said Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) told him as many as 3,000 such crashes occur on average in Illinois every year.

“A lot of people's first instinct when they get into a crash is to check on their injuries out of the car,” he said. “They should stay in the car and also alert anyone trying to help them to get out of the way and keep clear of the wires while waiting for first responders.”

Those first responders will call Ameren Illinois (or whatever power company services the area), who will come to the scene and immediately de-energize the wires – preventing them from being a clear and present danger to drivers.

In the case of being in the car being a danger, such as if it is on fire or severely smoking, Bretsch said motorists should open their door and hop with both feet from the vehicle without touching it. Bretsch said touching the vehicle may lead to electrocution, especially if one foot is on the ground. In fact, he said motorists are advised to hop from the vehicle without touching it and land on both feet. He said they should then hop, landing on two feet, for around 50 yards from the vehicle.