



# Interpretation

## Section 23. Clearances

### **Rule 235C2b(1)(a)**

Clearance for wires, conductors, or cables carried on the same supporting structure — Vertical clearance at the support for line conductors and service drops — Additional clearances — Sag-related clearances

(2023 Edition, page 142)  
(19 December 2022) IR595

**Question:** It is unclear how to apply the Code for situations where the supply conductor and communication cables have the required vertical clearance at the structure, yet in the span, the communication cables stay in lead but the supply conductor is pulled away (and often down). There is longer a vertical measurement to obtain.

Because there is no apparent horizontal separation requirement between supply and communication conductors in the span, how far apart horizontally must they be before the vertical clearance is no longer required?

**Discussion:** The Code contains horizontal clearance requirements at the structure (Rule 235B), and also vertical clearances at the structure (Rule 235C), then transitions to the span [Rule 235C2b(1)(a)], then goes back to the structure with diagonal requirements (Rule 235D).

There are countless situations where the supply conductor is no longer “above” the communication cables in the span once they leave the structure (see photo). It would seem that Rule 235C2b(1)(a) *would not* apply to these conditions since one cannot obtain a vertical measurement (often the surface under the respective lines is sloping as well).

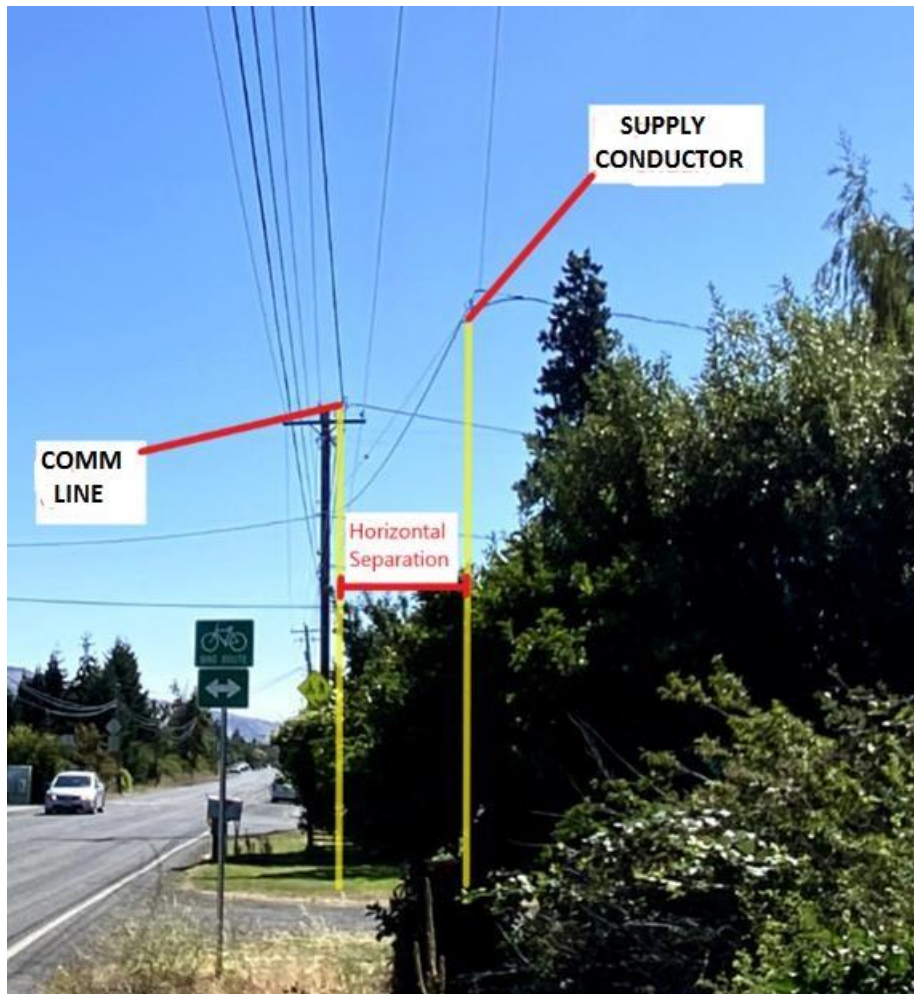
Safety can be achieved otherwise as prescribed in Rule 013A2b by applying Rule 012b and employing minimum approach distances.

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Thank you for your submission of this Interpretation Request. The IR Subcommittee has reviewed your request and developed the following consensus response based on the language of the 2023 NESC.

Question: Since there is no apparent horizontal separation requirement between supply and communication conductors in the span, how far apart horizontally must supply conductors be from communication cables before the vertical clearance is no longer required?

Answer:

There is not a horizontal clearance specified in the 2023 NESC at the supporting structure or in the span between supply and communication line conductors. If supply and communication line conductors are attached to the same supporting structures, the vertical clearances required by Rule 235C2b(1) apply within the span regardless if one or both line conductors are displaced due to transverse loads applied.