

Powerline Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for powerline worker roles are run by a network operator, ESI contractor or labour hire firm and usually involve a mix of technical panel members and a safety or HR representative. Expect the conversation to move between checking your trade qualifications and tickets, testing your judgement in hazardous scenarios, and confirming you can handle the physical and emotional demands of emergency callouts.

- **Safety and compliance:** Questions checking your knowledge of isolation procedures, WHS obligations and the tickets you hold, since this work sits under strict regulatory oversight.
- **Technical / process:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd diagnose a fault or carry out a specific repair task step by step.
- **Scenario / judgement:** Hypothetical situations involving storm damage, live wires or time pressure, testing how you weigh risk against urgency.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about teamwork, incident response or handling fatigue during extended emergency work.

Most interviews open with a check of your qualifications, licences and ESI competency units, move into technical and scenario questions run by a senior linesworker or supervisor, and close with behavioural questions and a chance for you to ask about rosters, on-call arrangements and the specific network you'd be working on.

1. Talk me through the isolation and permit process you'd follow before starting work on a de-energised line.

Why they ask

Isolation errors are the leading cause of serious injury and fatality in this trade, so panels need to hear you can recite the process without hesitation.

How to structure your answer

Walk through it as a sequence: identify the section, apply isolation, test for absence of voltage, apply earths and tags, obtain the permit, and confirm with control room before touching any conductor.

Example answer

"I'd start by confirming exactly which section needs to come out of service and communicate that to the control room operator. Once they've isolated the feeder, I test for absence of voltage at the work location using a rated tester, apply earths on both sides of the work area, and tag the switch so no one can re-energise it without going through me. I don't touch anything until the permit is issued and I've double-checked the earths are secure, because that's the step most likely to be rushed under time pressure."

2. Describe a time you had to make a quick decision on site that affected safety or the outcome of a job.

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure, which comes up constantly during storm response and fault work.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result, focusing on what you weighed up before acting.

Example answer

"During a storm callout we found a pole leaning badly with a live conductor draped across a fence line near a house. My task was to secure the area before anyone else approached. I set up an exclusion

zone, radioed control room to confirm the line was still live, and waited for the isolation to come through rather than assuming it was already dead. It delayed the job by twenty minutes, but it meant nobody walked into a live wire, and the crew backed the call once we debriefed.”

3. How would you diagnose a recurring fault on a feeder that keeps tripping without an obvious visible cause?

Why they ask

Fault-finding is core daily work and interviewers want to see a logical process rather than guesswork.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step technical walk-through from initial data gathering to isolating the cause.

Example answer

“I'd start by pulling the fault history and timing to see if there's a pattern, like tripping only in wind or rain, which points to a vegetation or insulator issue rather than a hardware fault. Then I'd do a visual inspection along the affected span, checking crossarms, insulators and connections, before using a multimeter and, if needed, thermal imaging to check for loose or overheating joints. If nothing's visible, I'd section the line and test each segment to narrow down the fault location before pulling a crew together to fix it.”

4. What would you do if you were called out to a job and the weather conditions were borderline for safe climbing or EWP use?

Why they ask

Tests whether you'll prioritise safety over pressure to restore supply quickly.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: state the risk, the decision criteria, and the outcome you'd aim for.

Example answer

“If wind or lightning risk is borderline, I'd hold off and communicate that clearly to the supervisor rather than push through, because a fall from height or an EWP incident in bad weather turns a power outage into a far worse situation. I'd look at whether there's a lower-risk temporary fix, like isolating the section safely until conditions improve, and keep the customer and control room updated so the delay is understood rather than seen as inaction.”

5. This role involves working across urban, regional and remote areas, sometimes on emergency callouts outside normal hours. How do you manage that kind of roster?

Why they ask

Panels want to confirm you understand the lifestyle demands, including travel and on-call work, before offering the role.

How to structure your answer

Direct response covering practical arrangements and past experience with similar rosters.

Example answer

“I've worked rotating on-call rosters before, including being paged out for storm response in the middle of the night, and I plan my sleep and travel around that rather than treating it as an inconvenience. I'm comfortable with regional and remote postings for stretches at a time, and I make sure my gear and vehicle are always ready to go so a callout doesn't turn into a delay.”

6. Tell me about your experience reading engineering drawings and specifications for new line construction.

Why they ask

Installing new lines and substations from blueprints is a listed core task, so interviewers confirm you can work from documentation, not just repair from memory.

How to structure your answer

Brief STAR example focused on a construction or installation task.

Example answer

"On a new subdivision feeder extension I worked from the distributor's design drawings to confirm pole placement, conductor sizing and clearance requirements before we started digging and setting poles. When the drawing didn't quite match a site obstruction we found, I flagged it to the design team rather than improvising, and we got a revised drawing back within the day so the install stayed compliant."