



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

**Date:** June 2, 2025  
**To:** Public Utilities and Public Works Committee  
**From:** Charlie Breen, Fire Chief  
Steve Craig, Director of Constituent Services  
**RE:** Item 25-0214 – That the Director of Constituent Services submit in writing, the protocol for proper handling of downed wires.

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Dear Members of the Public Utilities and Public Works Committee,

The following information from the Somerville Fire Department (SFD) and Constituent Services (311) is being provided to the members of this committee in response to the item referenced above.

There are various kinds of wires on the utility poles throughout the City, including electrical wires and telecommunication wires. Each wire is owned by the utility that uses it to deliver services to customers. The City does not have jurisdiction to systematically address the placement, or misplacement, of wires because they are property of the respective utility companies.

However, when there is concern about a downed or low hanging wire creating a hazard City staff will respond. The SFD responds to all downed wire reports, whether those calls are made directly to SFD Fire Alarm, 911 or to 311. When a call is made to 311, staff will connect the caller with the SFD Fire Alarm line. SFD has their own system for tracking calls, so the request on the 311 side is closed.

SFD will investigate the reported wire and verify if it is an electrical or communication wire. If electrical, Eversource is notified to respond since there is only one electrical provider in the city. When necessary, SFD will also notify Inspectional Services Department staff if the issue pertains to electrical feed into a building. If it is a communication wire, SFD will attempt to make the area safe either by cutting and removing the hazard or if possible, making a temporary repair such as securing the wire with zip ties. It is often not possible for SFD to determine which company a communication wire belongs to thus notifying the appropriate entity is challenging.

If anyone has a concern about a wire, they can call the Fire Department at 617-623-1700 to have it investigated. Those calling in the wire should stay on scene if they are concerned and SFD will gladly let them know the situation.

Please let the IGA team know if there are any further questions about any of the information provided.

Thank you,

**Charlie Breen**  
Fire Chief

**Steve Craig**  
Director of Constituent Services (311)



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