



# Interpretation

## Section 23. Clearances

### **Rule 235C2a(1), Examples (a) and (b)**

Clearance for wires, conductors, or cables carried on the same supporting structure—  
Additional clearances—Voltage-related clearances

(2017 Edition, pages 160–161)

(8 June 2018) IR584

**Question:** Company A builds a transmission line with distribution under-build circuits. Years later, Company B plans to buy the upper transmission circuit and structures, but the distribution circuits will remain with Company A. According to Rule 235C of the NESC Code, there is a larger clearance between the upper transmission circuit and the lower distribution circuit when the two circuits are owned by two different utilities. Because this line was originally built with all circuits owned by Company A, does the same utility clearance apply after the change in ownership?

**Discussion:** The Premier Edition of the 2017 NESC Handbook (p. 382) states the larger clearance is due to "...lack of familiarity of the employees of one utility with the property of another often necessitates a greater clearance." Page 382, Rule 235C Handbook

### **Interpretation**

The Interpretations Subcommittee reviewed the interpretation request and developed the following response.

The clearance for the "same utility" category in Table 235-5 does not apply after the change in ownership. The clearance for the "different utilities" category will apply.

The clearances specified in this Code are based on certain conditions. One of the conditions in Rule 235C and Table 235-5 that affects vertical clearances between circuits on the same supporting structures is the ownership of the circuits. When the ownership of one of the circuits changes, the condition that dictates the required vertical clearance also changes. Therefore, the application of the rules in the NESC is now based on the condition that the circuits are owned by different utilities. The greater vertical clearance specified for different utilities becomes the required basic clearance between the two circuits.

However, Exception 2 in Rule 235C2b(1)(b) does allow the sag-related clearance between different utilities to be 75% of the same utility clearance, at the structure, **BUT ONLY if all parties involved agree.** This applies only to the clearance in the span. The clearance at the structure must still meet the clearance requirement for different utilities shown in the last column of Table 235-5.