



Interpretation

Section 23. Clearances

Rule 232

Vertical clearances of wires, conductors, cables, and equipment aboveground, roadway, rail, or water surfaces

Table 232-1—Vertical clearance of wires, conductors, and cables above ground, roadway, rail, or water surfaces

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Question: Is the parenthetical information included with the clearance table a Rule requiring all ground faults on an effectively grounded electrical distribution system to be cleared “promptly”?

(Voltages are phase to ground for effectively grounded circuits and those other circuits where all ground faults are cleared by promptly de-energizing the faulted section, both initially and following subsequent breaker operations. See the definitions section for voltages of other systems.
See Rules 232A, 232B1, 232C1a, and 232D4.)

Discussion: The parenthetical language “and those other circuits where all ground faults are cleared by promptly de-energizing the faulted section” has been used by an electrical engineer who opines that this language is a Code requirement (Rule) requiring that an electric utility “promptly” de-energize a downed power line on an effectively grounded circuit. He advocates that the language requires **all** ground faults on an effectively grounded system to be cleared promptly, and if the fault is not cleared promptly, it is a violation of the NESC.

We believe the parenthetical language is a guide on how the voltage levels in the table are to be used and does not pretend to impose an NESC Rule requiring an effectively grounded circuit to promptly de-energize **all** ground faults.

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Clarity is requested on the parenthetical language. Is it a guide on how the voltages in the table are defined (based on the system design/construction) or is it a NESC Rule requiring all ground faults on an effectively grounded circuit to be cleared promptly under **all** conditions?

Interpretation

The Interpretation Request (IR) Subcommittee has reviewed your request and developed the following consensus response:

The parenthetical text between the title of Table 232-1 and the table does not require an effectively grounded circuit to be promptly de-energized when experiencing a ground fault. This parenthetical text provides guidance to determine which voltage classification to use in Table 232-1. Additionally, Section 23 covers clearances (Rule 230A) and contains no operating requirements such as requiring the prompt de-energization of a circuit.