

# **DUCT BANK POLICY**

## **BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

Northwest Construction, Inc. (“NWC”) Site Supervision is responsible for identifying and assessing all hazards related to the scope of work. The commitment is to take action to eliminate, reduce, or control these hazards. A particular area of focus, due to its high risk for the potentially fatal hazard of electrocution, is working on or adjacent to a Duct Bank.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and direction for NWC employees to mitigate the hazards associated with Duct Bank work and to keep everyone safe. This policy provides awareness and instruction to supervisors responsible for work on NWC’s projects.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all NWC employees. All employees conducting this type of work shall be trained in this policy and are required to follow it.

## **SOURCE DOCUMENTS/EVALUATION TOOLS**

COMPANY (\NWC-FS1) H:\SAFETY\Policies

## **DEFINITIONS**

Duct Bank: a group of two (2) or more electrical, fiber, or other communication utilities. These utilities do not have to be encased in concrete or other similar material to be considered a "Duct Bank".

## **ASSOCIATED PROCEDURAL STEPS**

### General Rules & Guidelines

- No breaker attachment, jackhammer, or chipping gun shall be used directly on or adjacent to a live electrical Duct Bank. This policy is without exception.
- A buffer zone of five (5) feet shall be maintained when a jackhammer, chipping gun, or other impact tool is necessary for work near a known Duct Bank, whether exposed or unexposed.
- When it is necessary to excavate material within the 5-foot buffer zone to expose a Duct Bank, at least one of the following options must be utilized:

#### **1. Option 1: De-energization (preferred and best option)**

- a. The utility owners shall be contacted about the possibility of de-energizing their utilities.
- b. If de-energization is possible, the NWC Supervisor shall verify that the appropriate lockout/tagout or energy control devices are in place and that the utilities are free of energy sources.

#### **2. Option 2: Alternate Excavation Methods (when de-energizing power is not an option)**

- a. A written response from the utility owner shall be obtained recording denial of de-energization and the reason.
- b. A meeting shall be conducted with the utility owner to discuss the hazards posed by working near an energized Duct Bank.
- c. The exact location of the Duct Bank shall be located and verified using alternate excavation methods such as hydro excavation, visual inspection, or radar.

3. **Option 3: Approved Comprehensive Work Plan** - When all material within five (5) feet of the Duct Bank cannot be removed by alternate excavation methods, a Comprehensive Work Plan shall be completed and approved by NWC's Safety Director and General Superintendent. This plan shall include:
  - a. Proposed method(s) for determining the exact location of the Duct Bank, including both the depth and width of the utilities.
  - b. Description of how the dimensions of the Duct Bank will be visually marked.
  - c. Methods for protecting those utilities during excavation, including the names of competent spotter(s) to be used during the task.
  - d. A written request for a Safety Monitor (provided by the utility owner) and the response received must be documented.

Once the plan is approved:

- a. It shall be reviewed with the crew, and all hazards identified and controlled before starting work.
- b. The work area shall be delineated and secured.
- c. A NWC Foreman or Superintendent experienced in working around live utilities shall oversee the work.

#### Locating Duct Banks

1. Locates for Duct Banks must follow the requirements outlined in the NWC's Live Utility Program and Locate Policy, including but not limited to:
  - a. All locates (public, private and refresh tickets) shall be maintained by NWC for the forty-five (45) calendar day period.
  - b. Use of another contractor's locate marks is prohibited.
  - c. Reliance on as-builts or other plans as the only source for locating power is never allowed.
  - d. When the exact location of a Duct Bank is not identified using standard locate methods, "Potholing" must be performed to verify the exact location.

#### Potholing

1. After locate services have provided general Duct Bank location information to the best of their ability, it may be necessary to perform potholing to verify exact locations. When this is necessary, the following procedures shall be followed:
  - a. Before potholing utilities, a thorough Pre-Task Plan must be created with all employees involved in the potholing process.
  - b. Following the Pre-Task planning discussion, a Pre-Task walk of the work area shall be conducted, and additional hazards or changes in the process identified during the walk shall be included in the Pre-Task planning documentation.
  - c. All information used for evaluating the hazards and the method selected to mitigate them shall be documented.
  - d. The depth of solid surface material (asphalt/concrete) necessary to be removed shall be verified to expose material that can be removed using hydro excavation techniques.
  - e. The length of the breaker or breaking device shall not exceed the depth of asphalt or concrete being removed.
  - f. The size and power of the equipment used should be sufficient to perform the work but not overpowered.
  - g. The collection and consideration of all information available to determine the depth location

of the Duct Bank shall be completed prior to breaking or saw-cutting on top of a Duct Bank.

- h. Potholing shall extend at least three (3) feet on each side of locate marks.
- i. If conditions change or new information is discovered, the operator and crew shall stop work and update the work plan, incorporating the new conditions and assessing potential hazards. Work shall proceed when those hazards have been eliminated or mitigated.

2. Saw-cutting and removal of surface material may proceed once the above requirements have been met.

#### Hydro Excavation

1. Hydro excavation is another method that may be utilized, but NWC operators and crews shall understand that hydro excavating does not eliminate all hazards and may introduce new and more serious hazards. The following is required of subcontracted hydro excavators:
  - a. Subcontracted hydro excavators shall have a policy in place to mitigate hazards associated with their work.
  - b. Subcontracted hydro excavators working around high voltage must wear electrical insulating gloves and boots.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. NWC Project Managers, Project Engineers, Superintendents, and Foremen are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the NWC Duct Bank Policy.
2. NWC Superintendents and Foremen responsible for work on a NWC jobsite are specifically responsible for:
  - a. Obtaining and confirming current locates before work commences.
  - b. Refreshing locate marks in accordance with our policy.
  - c. Preparing Pre-Task Planning Reports and conducting Pre-Task Planning Meetings to identify all risks associated with the Duct Bank work.
  - d. Reviewing operational plans for potholing and/or hydro excavation.
  - e. Conducting Pre-Task Walk Throughs of the work area.
  - f. Ensuring all NWC employees, particularly Supervisors, Operators, and Laborers, understand the Duct Bank Policy.

## **DOCUMENT HISTORY**

Last Amended: 1/6/2026

First Approved: 01/01/2016

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Northwest Construction, Inc. Duct Bank Policy. I have had an opportunity to ask questions to ensure my understanding and verify how this Policy shall direct my work.

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Employee Signature

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Date

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Employee Name (Printed)