

Chipping Concrete Off A Live Duct Bank

Three conduits. Four cables each. Seven thousand two hundred volts.

10 MIN

NFPA 70E Art. 110 · OSHA underground installations

Washington FACE 71-136-2015

WHAT HAPPENED

2014 · Washington · Site preparation contractor · 38-year-old laborer

A crew was digging trenches and installing storm drains in a hospital parking lot. A buried duct bank sat directly in the path of the planned storm drain run — three lines of PVC conduit encased in concrete, each conduit carrying four 7,200-volt power cables. To get the storm drain pipe down to grade, the crew used an excavator, a breaker bar, and a rivet-buster jackhammer to chip away the duct bank’s concrete encasement. The laborer was in the trench chipping concrete when the rivet buster punctured a conduit and contacted an energized cable. He died at the scene.

WHY IT HAPPENED

The crew knowingly worked on a live buried duct bank that had never been positively de-energized and grounded by the owner.

WHAT THE STANDARD REQUIRES

- Locate buried lines precisely before work begins — and treat locates as approximate until proven.
- Assume every buried line is energized until the owner confirms it is de-energized AND grounded.
- Do not perform work that exposes people to contact with energized lines. Redesign the work.
- General contractors and subs plan the site safety plan together, before mobilization.

TALK ABOUT IT — DO NOT SKIP THIS PART

1. Everyone knew that duct bank was there. What made chipping into it seem like the plan?
2. What is buried under where we are digging this week? Who confirmed it, and how?
3. Who has the authority here to say ‘we are not doing it that way’ and make it stick?

WHAT WE WILL DO DIFFERENTLY HERE

ATTENDANCE

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE