On August 20, 2014, a 38-year-old laborer was electrocuted when the jackhammer he was using struck an underground power line. The incident happened at a hospital parking lot where his employer was a subcontractor hired to install a storm water drainage system. His employer was a site preparation contractor. The victim was an experienced laborer and a member of the Laborers’ International Union of North America. His job duties for this project included digging trenches and laying and connecting storm drain pipe. On the day of the incident, the victim and two other employees were digging trenches and installing storm drains. At the location they were working there was a buried duct bank which was in the way and conflicted with the plans for installing the storm drain. This duct bank contained three lines of PVC electrical conduit piping encased in concrete. Each line of conduit piping contained four power line cables carrying 7,200 volts each. In order to install the storm drain pipes to the necessary grade, the employees were using an excavator, breaker bar, and a rivet-buster-type jackhammer to chip away at the duct bank concrete. The victim was in the trench chipping the duct bank’s concrete when his rivet buster punctured the conduit and contacted the power line cable. He was electrocuted and died at the scene.

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Statewide Statistics: This was number 53 of 70 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2014, and was number 14 of 15 construction-related fatalities.

This narrative was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

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