



Northeast Public Power Association Safety Corner

SEPTEMBER 2024

Anthony Calascibetta, Trainer

Setting Up the Work Zone

Setting up a bucket truck or the digger derrick in a work zone requires careful attention to safety protocols to protect both workers and the public.

Here's a guide to ensure a safe and efficient setup:

1. Pre-Setup Inspection

- **Vehicle Inspection:** Complete the Department of Transportation (DOT) circle check to ensure the bucket truck or digger derrick is in good working condition. For example, check the tires, brakes, lights, signals, etc.
- **Hydraulic Systems:** Inspect the hydraulic system for leaks and proper operation.
- **Bucket and Controls:** Test the bucket and controls for proper function. Ensure all safety devices, like outriggers and fall protection systems, are working. If there are any mechanical issues, they should be brought to the supervisor's attention immediately. If someone is new to operating a bucket truck or digger derrick, take the time to show them how to operate the trucks.
- **Job Assessment:** Perform a Job Hazard Assessment (JHA) Job Brief. Before commencing any work, ensure all team members know the associated hazards of the job. Complete the JHA, and once all team members agree and fully understand the related risks, they shall sign the JHA.

2. Work Zone Setup

- **Site Assessment:** Evaluate the work zone for hazards such as overhead power lines, uneven ground, or nearby traffic. Ensure the ground is stable and capable of supporting the truck's weight.
- **Traffic Control:** Set up appropriate traffic control devices, including cones, signs, and barriers, to guide vehicles and pedestrians away from the work area. Follow local regulations for work zone setup. If required, have a police detail on site.



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- **Clearance from Power Lines:** Maintain a safe distance from power lines. The minimum approach distance varies depending on the voltage, so consult local guidelines or OSHA regulations.
 - **Marking Underground Utilities:** Before deploying the outriggers, ensure that underground utilities are marked to prevent damage.
 - **Be Alert:** Always apply Situational Awareness. Be aware of your surroundings, and don't put yourself in a compromising position.
- Following these steps can minimize the risk of accidents and ensure a safe working environment.

REMEMBER, SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU!

3. Positioning the Truck

- **Stabilize the Vehicle:** Park the truck on level ground. If necessary, use wheel chocks to prevent movement.
- **Outriggers Deployment:** Fully extend the outriggers to stabilize the truck. Use outrigger pads if the ground is soft or uneven.
- **Leveling the Truck:** Use the truck's leveling system to ensure the bucket truck is level. This is crucial to prevent tipping when the bucket is extended.
- **Moving the Vehicle:** When moving or positioning the vehicle, ensure everyone is on the same page. Always have a spotter when backing up the vehicle. Don't place yourself in the Caught-Between Zone. Communication is paramount here.

4. Setting Up the Work Area

- **Work Zone Barricades:** Use barriers or caution tape to create a clear boundary around the work area.



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- **Warning Signs and Lighting:** If working at night or in low visibility conditions, set up proper lighting and reflective warning signs.
- **Public Safety:** Ensure unauthorized personnel cannot enter the work zone.
- **Emergency Plan:** Establish an emergency plan in case of accidents or equipment failure. Ensure all workers know the location of the job, the area of first aid kits/ AEDs, emergency contact numbers, and how to activate 911.

5. Operating the Bucket

- **Fall Protection:** Wear appropriate fall protection gear, such as a harness, and ensure it is securely attached to the designated anchor points.
- **Communication:** Use radios or hand signals to maintain communication between the operator and ground crew.
- **Load Limits:** Do not exceed the bucket's load capacity. Know the weight of tools and equipment being carried.
- **Weather Conditions:** Be aware of weather conditions. High winds, lightning, or heavy rain can make operations dangerous, and the job should be paused if these conditions arise.

6. Post-Operation Procedures

- **Stowing Equipment:** Retract the bucket and stow all equipment properly after completing the work.
- **Outrigger Retraction:** Retract the outriggers and ensure they are locked in place.
- **Final Inspection:** Conduct a final inspection to ensure all equipment is stowed securely and the work zone is cleared of hazards.
- **Traffic Control Removal:** Once the area is safe, remove traffic control devices and barriers in a systematic manner.
- **Job Assessment:** Although not required, you should conduct a post-job brief. This is a good discussion of what went well and what didn't.



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7. Training and Compliance

- **Operator Certification:** Ensure that all operators are certified to operate the bucket truck/digger derrick and are trained in emergency procedures.
- **Regular Training:** Conduct regular safety training and drills to keep the team prepared for emergencies and updated on the latest safety protocols.
- **Training:** Employees must receive yearly training on how to set up a proper work zone.

Setting up a Bucket Truck or Digger Derrick safely in a work zone involves thorough preparation, consistent communication, and adherence to safety protocols.



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