Sarah Kubik

From: Training
Subject: NEPPA Bucket Brief: Spring 2026

Seasonal Newsletter Brought to you by the NEPPA Safety Committee
-- Keeping Lineworker Crews in the Safety Mindset
with Key Reminders and Resources --

NORTHEAST PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

THE BUCKET BRIEF

LESSONS FROM THE LINE

Preparing for Construction Season & Staying Focused

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Spring 2026

In spring, public power utilities across New England begin transitioning from winter operations to construction and capital improvement projects. This seasonal change brings increased workloads, tighter schedules, and greater exposure to energized work, excavation, and system upgrades. Quarter 2 is a crucial time to slow down, refocus, and keep safety fundamentals as the top priority. Planning, communication, and situational awareness will determine how safely and successfully we navigate through the busy construction season.

-- The NEPPA Safety Committee

ACCIDENT REPORTS

Meter Failure - February 2026

Incident Summary: Preliminary Report

A NEPPA member Apprentice and Foreman were conducting scheduled change-outs at various water well locations, replacing transformer-rated meters and self-contained 16S meters. At one particular site, however, the installation differed from the typical configurations encountered. The service utilized a 12S meter in a 480V three-phase application. 12S meters are most commonly found in 120/208V services, such as residential or small commercial installations. They are less frequently encountered in three-phase water well applications.

At the beginning of the installation process, the Foreman recognized that this was an uncommon configuration not typically encountered within their system. The Foreman advised the Apprentice that the service was a 480V secondary application, which presents elevated hazards to the installation. The conductors were identified using the standard brown, orange, and yellow phase tape designation. The meter socket was also equipped with a bypass mechanism to prevent service interruption during the exchange. Prior to the work commencing, the Foreman and Apprentice reviewed the meter type, installation location, and all required documentation. The Apprentice, outfitted with the proper personal protective equipment (PPE), which included flame-resistant (FR) clothing, protective footwear, hard hat, rubber gloves, face shield, and safety glasses, positioned himself to the side, operated the bypass, and released the meter for removal.

After removing the existing meter, the crew re-verified all relevant information. Maintaining proper positioning and full PPE, the Apprentice proceeded with installation of the replacement meter. Immediately upon installation, the new meter filled with smoke internally and experienced a catastrophic failure, ejecting the cover and internal components outward toward the Apprentice.

Injuries: Preliminary
Fortunately, no injuries occurred. Although the event was loud and forceful, service continuity was maintained, and inspection of the socket revealed no visible damage or burn marks within the contents of the meter socket. The crew safely cleared the failed meter quickly from the socket and promptly notified their supervisor.

Follow-up:

After reviewing the circumstances, the utility contacted the meter distributor and the meter company confirmed that this installation required a specialized 12S meter similar in function to a self-contained 16S meter that must be special ordered due to its specific application.

Action:

Please review this report with your operations personnel. Throughout this process, all established safety procedures were followed, and all the proper PPE was utilized to the highest standard. Incidents such as this underscore the inherent unpredictability and hazards while dealing with different meter applications, particularly during large-scale AMI change-outs involving aging or uncommon equipment. Adhering to proper procedures and consistently wearing appropriate PPE are critical measures that significantly reduce the risk of injury, especially when working with aged meters, components or specialized configurations where equipment failure may occur unexpectedly.

Seasonal Spotlight: Spring Weather Hazards

Spring in New England brings rapidly changing weather conditions that can impact safety.

Watch for:

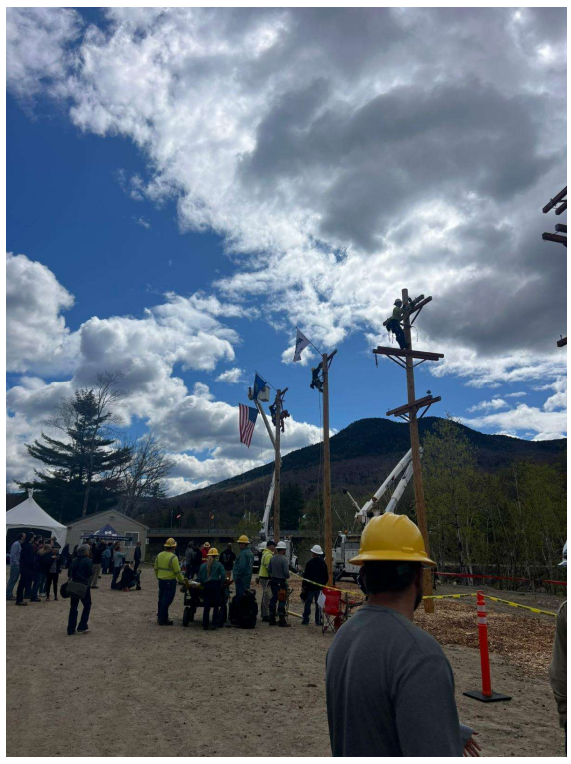
• Wet and muddy job sites leading to slips and equipment instability

• Sudden storms and high winds affecting aerial work

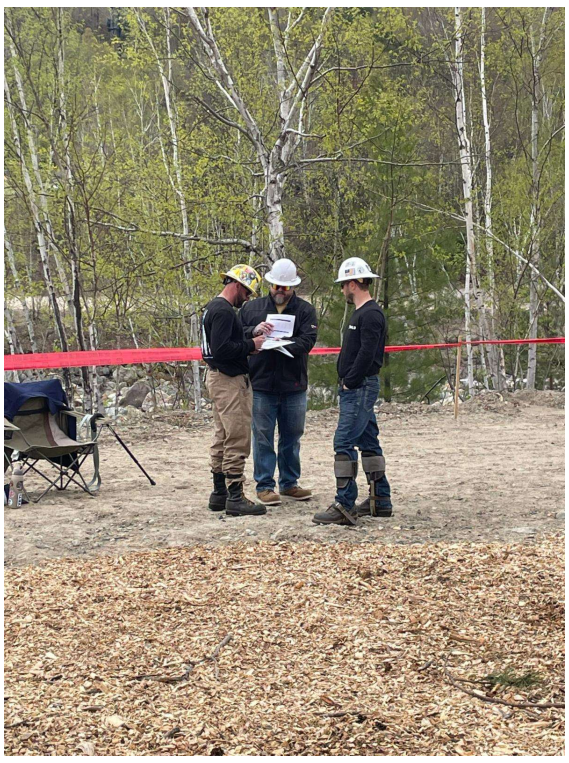
• Lightning risks during line work and pole setting

• Reduced visibility from rain and fog

• Soft ground conditions impacting outriggers and heavy equipment



Best Practice: Always reassess the job site when weather conditions change.



Focus: Construction Season Readiness

With projects ramping up, crews are often moving between multiple job sites and work types. Increased activity creates increased risk.

Key reminders for crews and supervisors:

• Conduct thorough job briefings and tailboards before every task

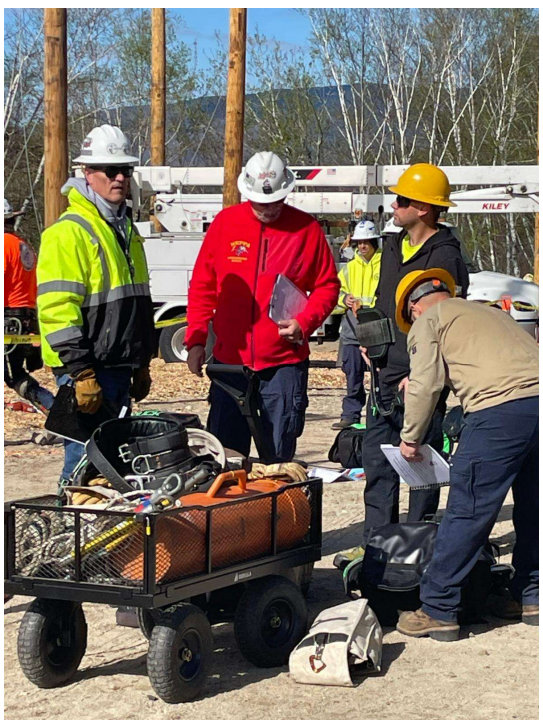
• Review switching orders, prints, and work plans in detail

• Verify grounding and protective measures before starting work

• Maintain clear communication between line crews, contractors, and dispatch

• Take extra time when transitioning between routine work and high-energy construction tasks

Preparation and communication prevent incidents.



Safety Mindset:

Complacency During Routine Work

Quarter 2 often includes meter work, inspections, vegetation management, and routine system upgrades. These tasks may feel familiar, but routine work is where complacency can quietly develop.

Stay engaged by:

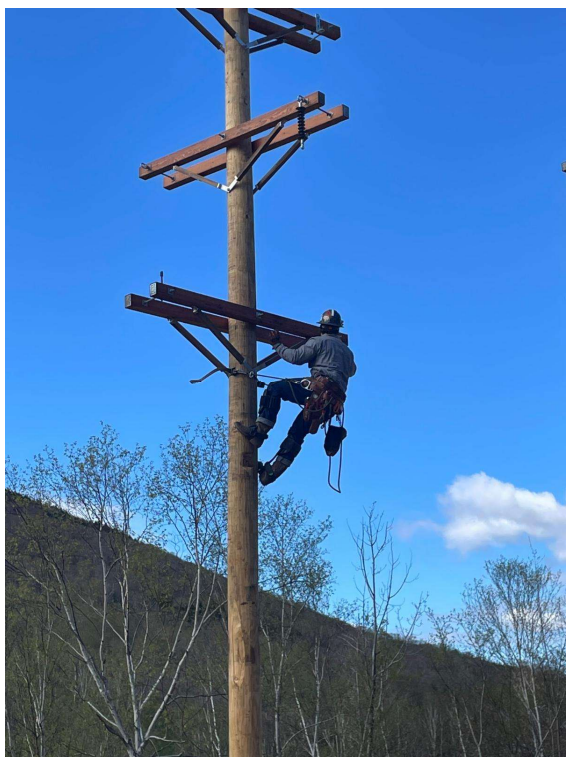
• Asking “What’s different today?”

• Performing peer checks on switching and grounding

• Staying mentally present throughout the task

• Speaking up when something doesn’t feel right

Complacency is one of the biggest risks in utility operations; awareness is the best defense.



Toolbox Talk:

Slow Down During the Ramp-Up

When construction season begins, there is pressure to move quickly and meet project timelines.

Remember:

• Production never outweighs safety

• Taking an extra five minutes to verify a plan can prevent serious incidents

• Safe work practices protect crews, the public, and the system

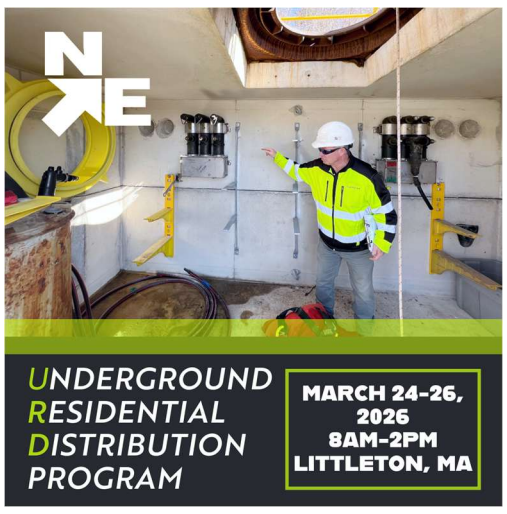
Key message:

Slow is smooth, and smooth is safe.

NO-SHOW NOTES

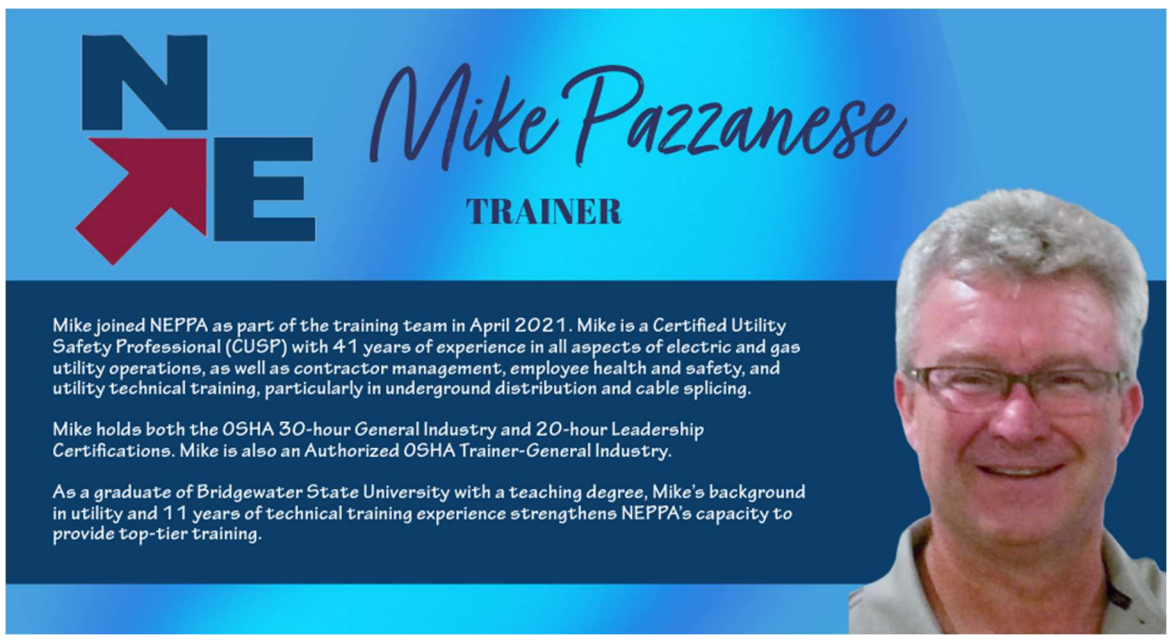
Hear about classes you may have missed out on...

Underground Residential Distribution (URD) Program (Tuesday, March 24th – Thursday, March 26th, 2026)

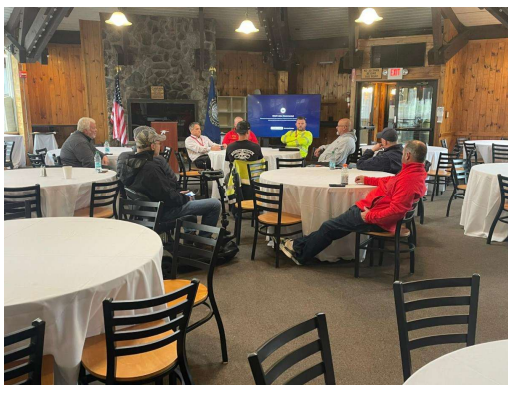


URD is a 3-day course held at the NEPPA Training Center twice a year. It is a popular course with a small class size that seems to always sell out. The instruction is very hands-on and interactive. This course is designed for those who build or maintain Underground Residential Distribution Systems. The true highlight of this class is the instructor, Mike Pazzanese. The experience and insight he brings to his work shows. Learn more about Mike below and if you're interested, sign up for the next URD class being held on October 13-15, 2026.

Register for URD in October



Member Spotlight Opportunity



NEPPA is looking to highlight member utilities that have:

- Strong safety initiatives
- Innovative training programs
- Near-miss lessons learned
- Safety milestones or achievements

Submit your stories and photos to safety@neppa.org for inclusion in future Safety Newsline editions.

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