



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

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VIA: Mark Alexander, Director - Maintenance & Operations
Robert B. McCleary, Chief Engineer - Transportation Solutions

FROM: Eric Cimo, Utilities Engineer

DATE: August 28, 2017

SUBJECT: Removing Fallen Vegetation or Other Obstructions from Aerial Utility Facilities

In light of a recent situations with trees falling on Verizon lines in New Castle, we wanted to provide updated guidance on how department staff should deal with removals from aerial utility facilities.

If vegetation or other obstructions come down on electric wires, the electric company will deal with removal of the obstruction and any damage to their facilities, and they will tend to this quickly. Vegetation or other obstructions that come down on communication cables is what creates response issues. Responses in these situations will differ between companies depending on the severity of the situation (i.e. cable still standing with no outage vs. cable is severed and down). The company response may be limited to fixing their facilities and not addressing the downed vegetation or obstruction. Since response seems to vary, depending on the impacted utility company, the following guidance should be applied.

1. First and foremost, we want everyone to be safe.
2. Try to accurately identify companies that are impacted so TMC can reach out to the correct companies. Correct and accurate identification is most difficult with communication companies, so try to look for company tags or other indicators on the aerial facilities and poles.
3. Once information is obtained by maintenance personnel and provided to TMC, TMC will reach out to the utility company emergency contacts to notify them of the situation. Information provided to the companies should be as descriptive as possible to include number of cables, type of vegetation/obstruction, if cable is severed/down or still intact and holding, broken or damaged poles, impacts to the roadway, impacts to the traveling public, etc.
 - a. Verizon has made it clear that they will not respond unless the 24-hour emergency phone operator is told that there is severe damage to the cable like it is severed and down on the roadway.
4. Following the phone call(s), TMC will provide maintenance personnel an update on the utility companies responses including the estimated time of arrival (ETA) of utility personnel on the scene, if any. If TMC is told utility personnel are responding to the scene, maintenance will maintain the area, wait for the personnel to arrive and let the utility personnel perform work once they arrive. If companies tell TMC they are not responding to the incident, TMC will document the discussion, notify maintenance personnel on scene and email others involved including the Utilities Engineer. From there, maintenance can contact Roadside Environmental so the on-call tree contractor can mobilize. TMC should also provide the Utilities Engineer and others within the Department with an email of the situation with the location(s), picture(s), what utility companies are involved, who from the companies were contacted, and what description was provided.
5. The Utilities Section will follow-up with their utility company contacts to ensure they are aware of the situation and path forward. It may be possible to get additional assistance from the utility companies at this point. However, the DeIDOT Utilities Section and the utility company contacts are only available during standard working hours.
6. If TMC/Maintenance have made companies aware of a vegetation or other situation that is deemed an emergency by DeIDOT due to impacts to the traveling public, and the company has either stated they will not respond via phone conversations or has failed to

respond to the site within 3 hours or a reasonable time given weather conditions and demands, DelDOT Maintenance will contact Roadside Environmental to have the on-call tree contractor remove the “hazardous tree”, vegetation or obstruction(s). Prior to performing work, maintenance personnel should properly document the site conditions via video or photographic means. The video, photos and written summaries of the existing situation and utility personnel contacted shall be sent to TMC and the Utilities Engineer.

- a. **No work is to progress until there has been response from the electric company, or electric companies, verifying that electric has been turned off and locked out or that they do not have facilities in the area.**
 - b. Maintenance personnel shall utilize the V-Watch Personal Voltage Detectors supplied by Occupational Safety to each yard during the 2017 M&O Spring Training to verify there is no electric being transmitted within the area even though already cleared by electric company prior to performing work.
 - c. It may be necessary for the Roadside Environmental tree contractor to bring in heavy equipment such as bucket trucks, boom trucks, etc. to the site to load cables under tension prior to removing obstructions so they are counterweighted and do not recoil or spring back while trying to remove the obstructions.
7. Upon completion of any work, maintenance should notify the Utility Section, and any other necessary DelDOT parties, that work is complete and of any incidents that may have resulted as part of the work using the email generated by TMC in item 4 similar to what is done with high priority maintenance work orders.
 8. Personnel responding to these incidents and performing work need to be safe and should take all necessary precautions to ensure safety while trying to reopen the roadway.

EC:rcp