

ROTBLOC UTL

# Case Study



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Alamon installed ROTBLOC UTL at the IBEW Local 9 Training Center in Chicago, IL, when several of their new utility poles prematurely rotted after just three years.



A conversation between IBEW Local 9 Training Director Jeff Johnson and Alamon Utility Services Operations Manager Matthew Warner



During an overhead climbing class at the IBEW Local 9 Training Center, an instructor and apprentice were injured when a three year-old pole failed at the groundline and fell over.

*“Why did this happen? I don’t ever want it to happen again.”*

-Jeff Johnson  
Training Director

Training Director Jeff Johnson asked Alamon to investigate the cause and find a solution.

## The Problem & The Solution

**Jeff Johnson:** So how did this happen? Why did this happen? The building is roughly three years old. All the poles are brand new. Matt (Warner, Operations Manager) was the first person I talked to from Alamon. He sent two guys over, Kris and Tristan, to assess the situation.

Kris tested the poles. You know, you screw into it on a specific angle, he’s looking at the wood shavings, he’s doing something like horse whispering (Jeff smiles, cups his hands and motions as if he’s smelling wood shavings). There’s a lot more to it, obviously. But he recognized very quickly what the issue was. Our training school sits in kind of a lowland area, and the water line is very high. When the new poles were put in, it’s like a tiki torch effect where the poles are pulling the

moisture up from underneath. And right about a foot underground where the oxygen meets the moisture is where every pole was corroded. And I was like, “okay, how can we do better?”

**Matthew Warner:** We knew ROTBLOC UTL was the answer. It’s going to shield your poles from the factors that contribute to decay. And as long as you get properly treated poles from your supplier, it’s going to trap those treatment chemicals inside that pole, and won’t allow them to leach.

Unfortunately, poles aren’t made the way they used to be. They’re not grown the way they used to be. They aren’t as naturally resistant to groundline rot.

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I answer to a board. I had to get answers. Alamon came out very quickly, recognized what the issue was, and recommended ROTBLOC UTL.

**Jeff Johnson**

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## Problem & Solution

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**Jeff Johnson:** Most of our climbing instructors did storm work in Carolina following Hurricane Helene. They were also in New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina. There are poles down there in swamps, in water, that date back to the 60s and they're still sound.

**Matthew Warner:** Those were likely old growth poles. If a pole you buy today is set in a wetland, you can't set a treated pole in a wetland, at least not up here in the Northeast. That pole isn't the same quality, and you're going to have issues with it.

My point is that you have a high water line here at your facility, and using a butt to groundline ROTBLOC UTL wrap should make these poles bulletproof. And we'll see that proof ten years from now when we do the follow-up inspection.



We don't typically do a full wrap from butt to tip with Cu-Bor pads at the butt end, because the whole point with ROTBLOC is that it enables you to minimize chemical treatments.

But given this circumstance, we wanted every possible layer of protection and an overabundance of caution.

The important takeaway is that the application of ROTBLOC UTL fit the need.

**Jeff Johnson:** At the training center, with every class we teach... street lights, overhead pipe bending, welding, digger derrick, crane... safety is the first word out of everybody's mouth.

This should never have occurred, but our focus is on making sure it does not happen again.

Alamon is helping us ensure that, and it's been a great partnership so far.



**Matthew Warner**  
Operations Manager  
Alamon Utility Services

