

Safety Alert

December 2015



Cutting of live redundant electrical cables

A serious incident involving a VicRoads contractor who sustained a suspected minor electric shock whilst cutting a live electrical street lighting cable within a traffic signal pit has recently been reported.

This safety alert reminds all workers of the serious risks to their health and wellbeing particularly when working in an unsafe system of work in connection with the cutting of electrical cables/conduits.

Background

The cable was considered by the contractor to be redundant and to have been de-energized by the electrical sub-contractor. It was believed that all live services had been proven onsite via manual pot holing and non destructive digging.

A comprehensive incident investigation has commenced and WorkSafe Victoria has been notified accordingly. One initial observed causation factor appears to be a lack of communication between the contractor and its electrical subcontractors who were working onsite.

Related works were immediately ceased and a toolbox meeting was undertaken to re-iterate safe systems of work that must be followed, these include but are not limited to:

- Develop and implement safe systems of work in a consultative manner, and give all workers onsite relevant information, instruction, training and supervision, as well as a site OHS induction covering issues such as first aid arrangements, traffic management, electrical testing and tagging, and mobile plant guidance,
- Ensure SOPs and SWMSs are current, available and signed by workers involved in the high risk work tasks,
- Ensure PPE/C is worn appropriately and maintained,
- “No Go Zones”, Dial Before You Dig (DBYD), relevant permits etc requirements are adhered to prior to work commencing,
- Ensure open OHS related dialogue protocols and clear communication channels agreed to amongst different work groups sharing the same work site/work place.

Additional information on working specifically with electrical underground assets can be found within November Safety Alert “Working with electrical conduits” circulated on the 02/11/15 and based on a WorkCover New South Wales safety alert that was generated by two recent worker electric shock fatalities associated with the cutting of live electrical cables/conduits.

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