

Incident Description

- During an operation to install a steel parapet VRS to a capping beam, a scaffold handrail was removed prior to the parapet being in place, which exposed operatives to an uncontrolled risk of a fall from height of 3.5m.
- Previous safe installation of the VRS had involved using a 'proprietary edge protection' system which allows the parapet to be installed whilst maintaining temporary edge protection. This had not been used in this instance.
- A general operative without any scaffold competence was instructed by the site team to carry out this task.
- The operative commenced the task without the use of a harness resulting in exposure to significant risk of falling from height.
- The operative was stopped before all the guardrail was removed.
- The Works Manager rectified the hand rail using a competent scaffolder.
- Upon investigation it was found that there wasn't a SSOW in place and a member of the site team instructed an untrained person to work at height without suitable edge or fall protection.
- This was a direct contradiction of the working at height procedure which requires a competent scaffolder to erect, adjust or dismantle any scaffold

Learning

- The company procedure to protect our workforce from the working at height risks was circumnavigated to prioritize program and sub-contractor availability.
- The task wasn't risk assessed or any methodology collated to allow this task to proceed.
- The SSOW provided by the Sub contractor wasn't site specific and didn't include working at height as a relevant risk, it is felt that this led to a lack of appreciation of working at height as a significant risk by the site team.
- The supervisor in charge of the works has been retrained in the site work at height expectation and coaching is ongoing.

