



Safety Alert

A striking reminder

22 September 2020

The following pages of this safety alert were issued by:

Environment Agency

Title: A striking reminder

Due by date: 15 September 2020

Short description: Initial learning from Safety Critical incident, where an excavator struck 11kV overhead power line

Allocated to: Operations Managers

Owner and contact for more information: Jonathan Jones

Email copies to: HSW Service, Phil Munslow, Emma Smailes, Toby Willison, Lucy Hunt, DOps

Safe and well



Critical and immediate safety action from the Deputy Director Health, Safety & Wellbeing

A striking reminder!

During river maintenance work a 21 tonne long reach excavator fitted with a weed cutting attachment, came into contact with an uninsulated overhead electricity cable rated at 11000 Volts. Fortunately no one was injured and the utility company repaired the damaged cable that day.



Due to the potential consequences this has been classified a Safety Critical Incident. We have reported this dangerous occurrence to the Health and Safety Executive, who have been in contact with us about the matter.

The initial facts point towards the importance of implementing our established control measures. The full facts and lessons learned will emerge in the review that has begun. However, the incident is an important reminder of the significant hazard presented by overhead powerlines. I am therefore reminding colleagues who undertake, supervise or manage work involving mobile plant and equipment of the key precautions that must be taken when travelling under or working near overhead powerlines.

Operations Managers must:

Brief those members of their teams who plan, supervise and undertake tasks involving mobile plant and equipment, and remind them to:

- Obtain up to date services information from statutory utility providers before the work commences
- Include the information on services in the Pre-Construction Information and/ or site pack for the activity
- Provide information on services and other hazards on a single map or plan of the site
- Implement all of the control measures specified in the risk assessment before the works proceed
- Carry out a pre-start briefing so that risks, controls and method of work are communicated to colleagues undertaking the task
- When plant is operating within 15 metres of overhead power lines, ascertain the voltage and height of the cables. This information is essential in determining exclusion zones, stand-off distances and for setting of height limiter devices

Please re-brief the [Tool Box Talk – Avoiding overhead services and buried cables](#).

Further details are contained in the OI, [Safe working & Travelling Under or Near Overhead services](#)

By close of business on 15 September 2020 all Operations Managers must:

Please note Safeguard is not being used to issue actions due to reliability problems (we shall shortly be moving Group Actions to Airsweb). As an interim measure;

Confirm that the action is completed and that the appropriate personnel have been briefed as requested by using the voting buttons on the notification email.

In your voting email please **please provide feedback** on how you have completed this action and any barriers that are hampering your team's ability to follow the guidance to keep people safe, or any questions that you have. Any further comments can be made via email to HSW@environment-agency.gov.uk using the title "A Striking Reminder."

If you have any queries on this, please contact Jonathan Jones Senior HSW Business Partner

Remember; taking these actions could prevent a colleague being hurt or seriously injured

This action was approved by the review team on 8 September 2020

To support this action, active monitoring suggestions include:

- Check if services information is included in site packs
- Ask site teams if they know the voltage and height of the overhead power lines they are working near or travelling under
- Check quality of site maps and plans to see if hazard information is included