

Safety Alert

Vacuum Excavator

High Potential Near Miss

8 December 2023

The following page of this safety alert was issued by:

MSF Ltd

NHa343

If you have any queries about this safety alert information announcement or any other safety announcement then please contact HealthSafety&Wellbeingteam@nationalhighways.co.uk

home **safe**
and **well**

Safety Communication

Location	Area 10	Internal	Yes	External	Yes
Distribution	Company Wide & Externally		Originator	Dean Powell	

Doc Ref: VAC29112023

Date Sent: 01/12/2023

Communication Title: VAC EX High Potential Near Miss M53

Background

On the 29th Nov 2023, whilst attempting to clear a blockage in the nozzle of a Vac Ex Machine the arm of the operator was sucked into the nozzle opening into the pipe. While the second operative was breaking up soil within the excavation at the time of the incident.



A member of the civils gang spotted the incident and activated the emergency stop, releasing the operator from the machine.

On this occasion the operative concerned was not injured and had a lucky escape. A full investigation is underway to determine the root cause of the incident.

Immediate Action

- The work was immediately stopped.
- Hazard and near miss report was raised.
- Issue reported to site management team.
- Vac Ex operations stopped pending investigation.

Loss of control event

- Operatives arm was sucked into the nozzle.

Immediate causes

- Nozzle Blockage created the need for clearance.
- Fans left running creating suction once blockage cleared.
- Operative working in a position under the nozzle and arm.

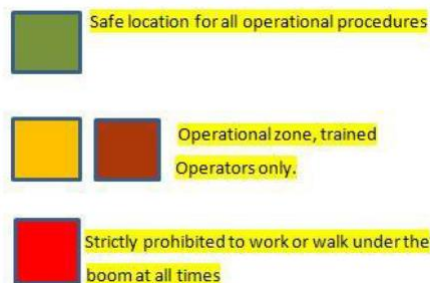
Contributing Factors

- Low temperature causing the spoil to freeze and block the pipe.
- RAMS blockage procedure did not state to isolate the machine.
- Second Operative was in the vicinity loosening soil in the excavation not assisting with the blockage.

Lessons Learned

- RAMS did not state correct blockage clearing procedures.
- Second Operative should have been on the controls during blockage clearance.
- Machine should be isolated prior to clearing blockages.
- Operatives must stand in the correct position to clear blockages from Hose Nozzles

Safety Zones on Vacuum Excavators



Interim Remedial Action

- Blockage procedure amended in Safe System of Work and trained out to the operators and immediate teams.
- All supervision in charge of Vac Ex operations are made aware of CPA safe operating guidance.
- All blockage clearance operations are to take place with the machine turned off and isolated.
- The PC has briefed the on-site teams regarding Vacuum Excavator Safety and the correct procedure for clearing blockages.
- An MSF Safety Communication has been released.
- 3-day interim investigation has been published.
- A full investigation is being performed

Document Owner	Associated Document	1.13 Communications	Review Date
Dean Powell	HS/Coms/Safety Alert/VA1		05/12/2023