



WORKING AT HEIGHT – WHEN IS A FENCE NOT A FENCE?

WLD.011

Description of Event

A wooden boundary fence has been installed at the top of a vertical drop instead of a pedestrian restraint fence

Population at Risk

Construction and Maintenance Workers, Inspectors and Travelling Members of Public (MoP)

Hazardous Activity and Residual Risk Description

- Working adjacent to a vertical drop which exposes workers to a working at height hazard with a risk of falls.

- MCDHW 306.2 Timber fencing for motorways are generally wooden post and rail fences and are used to delineate a boundary but are not suitable to prevent falls. When used at the top of a vertical drop 'an almost certain' likelihood of extreme harm could occur.



Photo broken wooden fence: top of wing wall

- Wooden posts and rails have a shorter life span requiring MEWP and/or fall restraint systems to be used to inspect, maintain and replace.
- Works may require temporary traffic management including lane closures that impact availability of SRN.

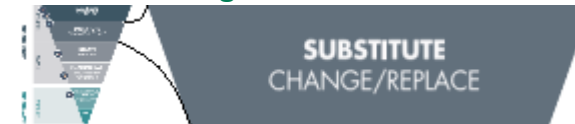
Potential consequences of this event

- 50% of all construction work fatalities were due to falls from height (HSE Dec 2021 statistics)

Safety Hub Alert Database

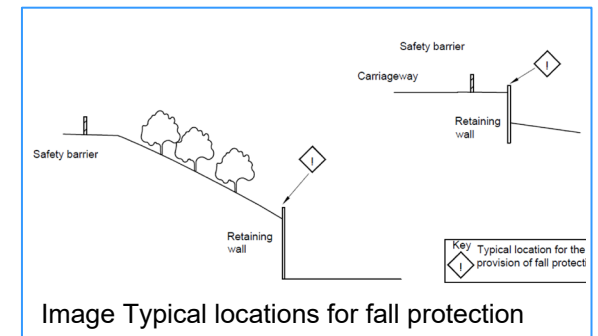
- Category "working at heights" has 13 injuries of which 4 are fatalities.

Potential Mitigation Measures



Design

- A restraint system that is installed on the edge of a bridge, retaining wall or similar elevated structure where there is a vertical drop (CD377)



Construction

- Think about the maintainer of the asset when installing new assets, and challenge designers/principal designers before automatically installing.

Maintenance / Operations

- Periodically assess safety and serviceability at a reduced frequency when restraint systems are used.
- Clarify if restraint system is appropriate and if not notify client,
- Report potential hazard e.g. in HART

Further Guidance and Reading

- [CD377](#) – Requirements for road restraint systems
- [HSE Dec 2021](#) – Construction statistics in Great Britain 2021
- [RtB 26](#) – Safety by Design
- [RtB 16](#) – Working at Height



Please send ideas for Whole Life Design safety shares to wellbeing@nationalhighways.co.uk

LEAN

Material Reduction

Alternative Materials

Reduced Plant

Alternative Plant

Reduced Labour

Reduced Land

Reduced Transport

Improved end user benefits

Reduced Activity Duration

Reduced Defects

Reduced Reportable Accidents