

Health & Safety Briefing Note

Incident learning – 11kv cable strike



HSBN 0099

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Introduction

The undertaking of any activity which involves breaking ground or excavations is a **high-risk** activity. The activity must be properly planned, managed, supervised and carried out to prevent incidents.



What happened?

As part of installation of a wooden knee rail fence on one of our sites, a contractor was digging holes for the fence posts and caused **damage to an 11kv buried high voltage**



cable with an auger. Fortunately, this did not result in any individual suffering harm, however, the loss of power had **serious impact to the resilience** on one of our sites.

The work was undertaken by a **non-framework contractor** who had **not been issued** with the essential standards, was not using the right tools and had deviated from the agreed method statement without seeking further approval from the TWOSA issuer.



Action required

Those authorised to issue a TWOSA must ensure the principles in **Essential Standard 1 Excavations** and **Essential Standard 27 Utility Management** are followed when works involve breaking ground. In addition, they should ensure the following:

- **Contractor Selection:** All contractors working for or on behalf of Thames Water should be an approved framework supplier and have an in-date Achilles assessment. This should be verified prior to issue of TWOSA.
- **Exchange of information:** The COP must provide information on the risks and hazards on site as part of the exchange of information prior to TWOSA issue. This includes the HSI14 for the site along with any drawings, plans or other information essential to carrying out the works safely.
- **Risk Assessment:** With any task there are opportunities to stop and reassess the risk, in this case the opportunity to verify all services had been properly scanned and identified before issuing a permit to dig was missed. For high risk jobs it is essential that stop points are included to validate conditions – this principle is set out in [Essential Standard 10 - Risk assessment](#)
- **Monitoring:** Contractor activity on site should be reviewed regularly to ensure the works are being carried out to the agreed method statements and remain within the scope of the TWOSA issued. A SHE6 inspection should be recorded on Safeguard and actions raised to address any issues identified.

Everyone:

- Check all contractors working on site have a valid Thames Water Safety Passport
- Don't be afraid to challenge if you see something that doesn't feel quite right.

