

What Happened?

- Team were tasked with undertaking a service pipe relay in the carriageway which ran to the boundary of the property.
- Team had successfully excavated in the footpath, exposed the 4" main and partially dug the relay trench in the carriageway. They had located and positively identified a lead water supply in the carriageway.
- As the team leader started cutting the lead pipe located in the footway with a pair of poly-cutters, there was a pop and a puff of black smoke.
- There were no injuries to either team member on site.



Why did it really happen?

- During 3 days of work, the team had a number of setbacks causing the delay, one of which was a failed ferrule on the main resulting in the trench being filled with water.
- Team Leader made assumptions that the lead pipe he cut must be the water supply as it was in line with the lead supply he had exposed in the carriageway some 5m away.
- Team leader did not undertake any checks to positively identify the service as water:
- Failure to undertake specified checks to positively identify service
- Failure to call supervisor before cutting into service as briefed 2 weeks previous despite various changes to the original job there was no stop point and site meeting held to discuss the changes and replan the job.

What can I do differently?

- Always follow Safe digging procedures, they are designed to protect you, your peers and members of the public (RAMS, HSG47, site specific procedure).
- Reassess the area to be excavated and escalate any findings to supervisor when unsafe conditions are observed.
- All identified services should be clearly marked up, extended outside the work area and in the excavation. Renew mark up if top layer has been removed.
- Follow the safety critical checks process before cutting into a main, service or duct.
- If in doubt STOP!