

What Happened

Whilst undertaking trial holes to enable UKPN to make connections of two known power cables in the area, an operative using insulated hand tools came into contact with a low voltage street lighting cable, damaging the outer sheath of the cable.



No one was injured in the incident, the operatives were wearing full flame retardant PPE and there was no arcing, sparks or smoke. The cable was not energised at the time of the damage, there was no loss of power and the streetlights were operational in the evening.

Immediate Action Taken

As soon as the cable was discovered, operatives stopped work and informed management of the occurrence. The area was made safe and UKPN were called to undertake a repair. All other ground penetrating activities were suspended, and the investigation commenced.

Key findings:

- Ground penetrating radar drawings had identified the presence of the cable, but these had not been provided to the excavation gang with the Permit.
- A Vacuum Excavator couldn't be used due to restricted access and traffic management conflicts.
- The Genny was not used to accurately identify the street lighting cable (which wasn't energised).
- Air picks/lances were not considered or used as part of the safe system of work.
- Competency of the appointed persons for issuing permits and service location on the ground had not been confirmed.

Actions

- Ensure the relevant drawings are provided and available prior to approving permits
- Ensure that Appointed Persons competency checks are reviewed and confirmed as part of the appointment process.
- Follow the hierarchy of control - and wherever practicable, use vacuum excavation and/or air lances in proximity to services
- Make regular, frequent sweeps of the CAT scanner, always utilising the Genny
- Stop work if anything changes. Consult management and key personnel before continuing.