

SAFETY ALERT

2020-UK-SA-001

10th January 2020

Fatal Injury, Birmingham, England

What happened?

On Tuesday 7th January 2020, there was an incident at the National Buried Infrastructure Facility site at the University of Birmingham. Two subcontractor colleagues working for one of our supply chain partners were injured in a fall from height. Tragically, one suffered fatal injuries. The scissor lift they were working from was struck by an overhead travelling crane operated by a third party contractor working for the customer, causing it to topple over.

Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with the families, friends and colleagues of those involved.

Immediate actions

Investigations are currently underway. In the meantime, all projects and site leaders must take immediate steps to ensure that:

- All operations are reviewed in light of this alert and that effective safe systems of work and arrangements are in place for coordination of interfacing activities, and for their monitoring and supervision. This includes the provision of competent supervision by all subcontractors. Communications between the principal contractor, supply chain and the customer must be clear, consistent and regular to aid collaboration and ensure safety is prioritised.
- Any overhead travelling crane or gantry crane is isolated and locked off with a formal 'permit to work' safe system whenever any activity is undertaken at height where there is potential for collision, for example, when using a scissors lift, MEWP, tower scaffold etc.
- For all sites where we act as Principal Contractor (PC) there must be a clear documented understanding that Balfour Beatty has full control of the site and its boundaries with authority to stop works. All duty holders including our customers have a duty under CDM 2015 to cooperate and coordinate interfacing work activities and communicate information effectively. A brief outline of the PC and client role can be found using this [link to the HSE website](#).
- Everyone is aware of their responsibilities under the Construction Design and Management regulations (CDM). Training for new managers or refresher training for existing managers is available through our technical training team – speak to your local HSES lead to arrange.

Comment

Tragically, it would appear that our colleagues were injured as the result of a breakdown in arrangements for coordinating interfacing operations. It is a terrible reminder that we all have a part to play to be vigilant, including where there is the potential for collisions. Safety is always our first priority, no matter the circumstances. Any pressure or perceived pressure to accelerate works which could compromise safety must be escalated.

Please make sure that everyone is aware of the [Golden Rules](#) and understands them clearly. And that they should be followed without compromise. If you have not yet completed your back to work briefings, this would be a good opportunity to reinforce that message. We must look out for each other, follow the rules and procedures and never walk by if we think an activity could be unsafe.

Heather Bryant, Health, Safety, Environment & Sustainability Director