NORTHERN POWERGRID

SAFETY BULLETIN

A SAFETY INCIDENT HAS TAKEN PLACE



Pole Collapse Adjacent To Excavation During Removal Works	
Issued to:	All Operational Staff and Service Providers
Date of Incident:	22 June 2026
Location:	Long Lane, Skeffling
Classification:	Near Miss
Contact:	Health, Safety and Training
Issue Date:	06 August 2026

OVERVIEW

A free-standing pole-mounted substation was installed in September 2025 to provide a temporary supply for a water pumping station construction site. The substation comprised a pole, 11kV cable and termination, 100kVA pole-mounted transformer, 11kV fuses, LV fuses and cabling.

A non-standard 12m stout grade pole had been used due to pole supply issues at the time. The 11kV cable had been cleated to the pole in a position slightly different to the specification drawing 1091080865.

A planned outage was underway to disconnect the 11kV & LV cables and recover the pole-mounted substation. Five days before the outage, the area around the base of the pole had been excavated to facilitate cable jointing works.

On the day of the outage, the substation had been disconnected from the network. Personnel had moved away from the immediate area to undertake other work when the structure collapsed, damaging the pole-mounted transformer and temporary fencing around the excavation.

Work was immediately suspended and the area made safe. The 12m stout substation pole had originally been installed to a depth of approximately 2.2m, with around 1m of ground excavated adjacent to its base for cable jointing works.

Initial evidence indicates the excavation reduced foundation support and compromised the pole's stability, leading to the collapse.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Structural stability can be affected by excavations – a joint hole had been excavated adjacent to the pole base and remained open for several days prior to the collapse.

Heavy pole-mounted equipment imposes significant loading – the transformer, platform and associated steelwork created a substantial load acting in the direction of the collapse.

Ground conditions can change over time – evidence of drying and cracking ground was observed around the excavation and pole location.

High potential incident – jointing staff had previously been working within the excavation prior to the pole collapse.

Key Takeaways:

- Consider structural stability and ground conditions when planning works.
- Assess the impact excavations may have on nearby poles and other structures.
- Maintain suitable exclusion zones around structures that may be vulnerable to movement or collapse.
- Act on signs of instability such as leaning poles, ground movement, settlement or cracking.
- Stop work and seek further assessment if structural integrity cannot be assured.
- Ensure quality standards during excavation, construction and backfilling of overhead supports. References include: NSP/004/042 – Specification for HV Wood Pole Lines up to and including 33kV & NSP/004/101 (OHI 1) - Guidance on Pole and Stay Holes.