NORTHERN POWERGRID

NEWSSAFETY

Newsflash - 2018 07

09 May 2018

INTERNAL

Every employee and contractor, working for Northern Powergrid, should go home at the end of each shift uninjured and in good health after a productive days work

Work at Height – Pre-pole Climbing Checks.

Following a recent call from a customer, Northern Powergrid staff attended site and found that an LV pole which was replaced in 2014 had in fact been planted shallow. The scarf mark appeared to be at the correct level indicating the pole was correctly installed. However, further investigation identified that the butt of the pole had actually been cut off leaving it short and thus unstable and dangerous to climb.

The only indicators as to the instability of the pole were:

a. The pole was reported by the customer to "sway in the wind", and
b. There was evidence of movement at ground level where the pole had displaced paving stones at its base.

An investigation is currently underway to determine who was responsible for the installation and we are trying to determine whether any other newly installed poles may have been planted shallow.

This brief is a reminder to all staff who climb poles that they must always be vigilant. They should always risk assess any access to poles in line with the Work at Heights Policy, HAS/034 and their training.

It is prudent to remind all our staff who climb poles of their responsibility to carry out pre-climbing checks and that poles should only be climbed if more suitable access methods higher up the hierarchy of working at height controls are impracticable for the site specific circumstances.

Once pole climbing has been deemed necessary, then before the pole is climbed or relied upon for personal support, it is the duty of the person who is to climb the pole to verify that it is in a safe condition to climb.

The following tests as a minimum shall be applied to all poles before they are climbed;

- A thorough visual examination of the pole and its surroundings.
- A hammer test.
- A prodding test, which consists of prodding or probing the surface with the point of a sharp object, such as a bradawl or a long thin bladed screwdriver or similar tool.
- Additional precautions specified in AC500 (2018 03) and > 50 year old wood pole (2018 05) newsflashes issued recently.

In addition be aware of this specific incident and look for additional signs which may indicate a pole may not be suitable to climb. These may include:

- Does the pole sway uncharacteristically, possibly indicating that the butt has rotted or been cut off?

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- Is the hole into which the pole sits elongated or elliptical with spaces at any point indicating past movement?
- Are the ground conditions suitable to support the weight of a ladder, water logged / boggy conditions?
- Are there any obstruction preventing safe access?

Further details relating to inspection guidelines can be found in NSP/004/112 (OHI 12) Guidance for the inspection and testing of wood and steel poles.

Remember working at height is a potentially hazardous activity and to execute work safely, procedures must be followed by trained and competent staff. If in any doubt then don't climb.