

23/08/2018 - 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

Update on Asbestos in Operational Premises

Recently there has been a significant increase in the theft of copper earthing tape from our distribution substations. The full extent of any theft of substation earthing is not easily confirmed without lifting trench covers to check the connections below. To all intents and purposes the earthing looks to be intact. This could present a serious electrical hazard to operatives under fault conditions if left undetected.

We are aware of over 100 indoor substations where earthing has been stolen below the trench cover level and we are checking other substations in the areas affected along with working to replace the earthing system at these sites. This has also led to questions from staff regarding the lifting of trench covers in substations where asbestos materials may be present.

In general, the asbestos surveys of indoor substations did not check the cable trenches for the presence of asbestos fibres and therefore additional precautionary measures need to be taken to manage any potential asbestos risk.

All Northern Powergrid operational premises have been surveyed by accredited asbestos surveyors and a copy of the asbestos report should be located at each substation site along with appropriate labelling on the back of the substation door. **Any operative entering a substation should,**

- a) Check that the asbestos survey is present and**
- b) Check the survey report to understand where a potential asbestos risk may be present.**

The asbestos surveys generally did not include cable trenches and substation basements so **always presume asbestos is present** in these locations.

The asbestos surveyors were not authorised / qualified to inspect electrical components so the surveys will **always presume asbestos is present within electrical equipment**. This should not prevent normal operation of such equipment as any asbestos present will be contained within the equipment and present no risk of release of asbestos fibres. As an example, all the surveys will presume asbestos to be present in ceramic LV distribution fuses. We have been assured by our fuse suppliers, Lawson that their fuses do not, and have never, contained asbestos.

The current situation is that the lifting of substation trench covers at substations to carry out an inspection of the earthing, that will not have been checked on the original asbestos survey, requires asbestos PPE and RPE to be worn for the lifting of trench covers until further guidance is provided.

The wearing of the asbestos PPE / RPE for lifting trench covers is a precautionary measure whilst the results of air tests are made available. We are undertaking air sampling at a number of substations to establish the level of disturbance to the air (and potential release of asbestos fibres) caused by the lifting (or sliding) of trench covers. We have conducted many hundreds of air tests on our asbestos abatement works over the years and we have not found asbestos fibres in the atmosphere at the exposure limit levels so we do not expect to detect fibres in the atmosphere purely as a result of lifting a trench covers.



We will provide further guidance and hopefully remove the need for asbestos PPE and RPE in certain circumstances as soon as the testing information is available which proves that there is no risk of inadvertent exposure. As a precaution all PPE/RPE shall be disposed of in accordance with the asbestos waste procedures.

The careful lifting of trench covers should not cause any significant disturbance to dust particles / asbestos fibres that may be present in the bottom of the trench. The presence of asbestos fibres in the trenches is more likely where the cables have asbestos tape wrap applied. In accordance with previous instructions, these should already have been identified on the asbestos survey and the above ground section of the cable tapes sealed.

Emergency Earthing Repairs.

The wearing of the asbestos PPE / RPE for making a temporary / permanent earth connection to the loose earth tape within the substation trench which is located and fixed to the top of the trench and does not require working from within the trench is permissible. The trench covers can then be replaced and the remainder of the temporary / permanent earthing carried out outside of the cable trench and run around the substation walls.

N.B. The normal electrical safety precautions will need to be applied and agreed with the SAP or suitably authorised person.

General Reminder Regarding Work in Operational Premises

Before any operations are carried out in operational premises the on-site asbestos report should be checked to make sure the work does not disturb any asbestos.

If any obtrusive works, i.e. those involving disturbance to the fabric of the building, walls, floor, ceiling, doors, windows, or access to cable trenches or basements, are to be carried out, an asbestos refurbishment survey must be undertaken of the parts of the building to be disturbed or accessed.

Please refer to **Operational Bulletin No.2016 04 issued on 1st June 2016** for more detailed information on other asbestos working guidance associated with specific asbestos hazards in substations:-

- **LV Distribution Boards clad with asbestos containing materials (ACMs)**
- **LV Distribution Boards Previously Clad with ACMs (South Yorkshire LV Boards).**
- **LV boards clad/containing well bound composite asbestos materials**
- **Surveying Update**
- **Abatement Update**

Useful Contacts

Asbestos surveyors

- During normal working hours contact:
Pete Wilstrop (Network Inspections Manager).
Tel No: 01977 605441 (Office) or 07789 272 548 Mobile (Mobex: 716 1168)
- Out of hours contact:
Northeast & Yorkshire Lucion 0845 0344326

Abatement Contractor

- During normal working hours contact
Russ Pearce (Building and Civil Engineer)
Tel No: 01132 274360 (Office); Mobile: 07834 575677 (Mobex: 716 2352)
- Out of hours contact:
Northeast and Yorkshire Rhodar 0843 3205127 out of hours request National Key Accounts
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