

SAFETY BULLETIN SB 4/2017

Contractor in Primary Substation brought tree branch into close contact with live 33kV equipment

Incident

Tree cutting contractors were given access to a 33kV substation compound to position their chipper and to cut trees outside the boundary fence. Without properly checking the contractor competencies, access was provided by a Senior Authorised Person (SAP) to a safe zone of work defined by cones and barriers in the compound adjacent to live equipment.

The contractor team had completed a risk assessment but hadn't considered working within the substation compound. They were issued a Limitation of Access by the SAP, but were not adequately briefed and were left to carry out work under their own supervision.

While cut branches were being passed into the compound from the boundary and carried to where a chipper had been positioned in the defined safe zone, one came into close contact with exposed live 33kV equipment resulting in a contractor receiving a minor electric shock. The contractor was taken to hospital but was later released and returned to site with no injuries.

Following investigations it was found that the contractor team did not have suitable authorisations to receive a Limitation of Access or work alone in a substation.

Learning Points

Staff setting contractors to work in substations must always check whether it is necessary for them to work in a live substation compound and if so they should check that the contractor's staff are suitably authorised and that the work will be completed in a safe manner:

- POL:HS2/5 – and associated STs relating to safety management of contractors e.g. ST:HS2G/1 – requires *all contractors and their employees undertaking work for WPD shall, as a minimum, meet the same standards in respect of health and safety at work as are expected of WPD employees*. Suitable method statements and site specific risk assessments should be available to ensure mitigation of risk and a clear understanding of how the work should be carried out safely by all parties
- ST:OS3A/2– Only suitably authorised persons, or persons under the appropriate level of supervision are allowed to enter a WPD substation compound (never assume contractors hold a substation access authorisation)
- ST:OS5C/2 – Limitations of access shall only be issued to suitable staff/ contractors authorised to receive them with LOAR authorisations