NORTHERN POWERGRID

NEWSSAFETY

Newsflash - 2016 14

17th November 2016

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

Moving a cable winch results in a leg fracture

On the 7th of November 2016 a contract operative suffered a broken leg whilst attempting to manually manoeuvre a cable winch trailer. The winch trailer was being moved manually as site conditions prevented the delivery vehicle from being used to reposition the trailer. The manoeuvre required the winch trailer to be pushed over a kerb edge. Sand bags had been put in place to form kerb ramps but as the winch was pushed towards the kerb one of the trailer wheels jammed against the sandbag/kerb rather than riding over the top of it as expected. This resulted in the towing arm swinging violently and hitting the operative on the leg just below the knee.

A pre task risk assessment had been completed by the operatives on site but it is clear that the routine activity of manually moving the winch into position did not identify the hazard associated with the change in levels at the kerb and the rotational forces that would be applied on the winch. The uncontrolled movement of the towing arm combined with the operative pushing the trailer being in 'the line of fire' resulted in the serious leg fracture injury.

When planning any activity a thorough risk assessment needs to be undertaken and the work planned to ensure all potential risks are identified and controlled.

- Manual handling issues needed to be taken account of.
- Correct equipment needed to be utilised. i.e. kerb ramps as opposed to sand bags
- Identification of 'line of fire' areas i.e. the movement of the tow hitch.
- The need for the correct approach to the kerb, i.e. an angle of 90 degrees.
- The momentum needed to mount a kerb at such a steep angle formed by the sandbags
- The number of operatives required to safely control the weight of the winch trailer.

It is so often the case that what seems to be a routine activity needs to have the more care taken in the planning and execution of the event. We have had a number of incidents where staff have inadvertently put themselves 'in-the-line-of-fire' when carrying out an activity and the circumstances have resulted in those staff receiving an injury.

It is easy to see how operatives, in their attempt to get the work done, underestimate the risk associated with some of the more routine but nevertheless hazardous activities. With hindsight, it is probably easy for the operatives involved to have evaluated how they could have done the task safely and it is unfortunate that such a serious injury has occurred when the foreseeable risks could have been mitigated. **Before undertaking any task, play it out in your mind. What will happen when I do this? STOP – THINK and then ACT.**