

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.

Cut to the Head Whilst Removing Ladder from Vehicle Roof

An accident occurred on Saturday 31 May which resulted in a Rapid Response Operative sustaining a cut to his head as he took a ladder down from the roof rack of a colleague's vehicle. The Rapid could not locate the tool provided to withdraw the ladder. This, coupled with a level of distraction caused by a member of the public and the vehicle being parked on an incline, resulted in the Rapid being in the "line of fire" of the descending ladder. The system used for ladder storage and removal was the City-Load system.

The Rapid reversed into the customer's property, in line with best practice, resulting in his vehicle being on a gradient with the rear of vehicle being lower than the front. The Rapid was not in his own vehicle and could not locate the operating handle. The operating handle allows the operator to reach the ladder and control its descent without having to stand on the vehicle or beneath the descending ladder. At the point the Rapid had unlocked the ladder by hand, and slid the ladder out approximately 600mm, he was distracted by a member of the public. Unknown to the Rapid, and while he was distracted, the ladder descended under gravity, due to the vehicle being parked on a gradient, and hit him on the head.

Learning points

- Wear a safety helmet in addition to normal PPE requirements for the work being undertaken
- Follow the operating and safety instructions provided by the manufacturer
- Use the operating handle provided
- Anticipate the effect of inclines on the motion of the system. The system will travel quicker on a forward facing incline
- Do not allow the ladder to free-fall. Control the movement at all times
- Stand behind, not underneath, the ladder loading section and step backwards controlling the motion of the ladder. Once the ladder is past the pivot point, do not stop; lower the ladder completely to the ground. Do not place yourself in the line of fire.

