NORTHERN POWERGRID

NEWSSAFETY

**Newsflash – 2019 02**

**7th February 2019**

**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

# Slip, Trip & Fall Accident

On 28 January 2019 an apprentice jointer slipped on unstable ground at the edge of an excavation and fell into the joint hole injuring his ankle. The picture (right) shows the excavation where the jointing team was working on a fault repair. The jointer was in the joint hole preparing a new cable for jointing, and the apprentice was tidying the site around the joint hole. He stood on what he thought was solid ground at the side of the joint hole to reach some waste material but the ground did not take his weight as expected, giving way and causing the apprentice to fall backwards into the joint hole and land awkwardly on his ankle. The apprentice attended hospital and an x-ray indicated that he may have suffered a fracture to a small bone in his ankle. Subsequent treatment revealed the injury to be a ligament injury. This has resulted in lost time from work but his injury will heal fully in due course.


Work in and around joint holes is an everyday activity for our jointing teams and each work place can present a variety of hazards. Typically we experience at least one incident a year where a slip or a fall entering or leaving an excavation results in a reportable injury. We are aware that there may be many near-misses that occur but don't get reported through the 159 reporting line.

Slips, trips and falls often occur where a hazard is perceived to be low risk, yet many result in serious outcomes, therefore each route into and out of the joint hole has a different set of hazards that need to be mitigated to reduce the risk of a slip, trip and fall event. Excavations and street works are a daily feature of our work and the routine nature of the work can sometimes create over familiarity with the hazards associated with work sites and, as a result, wrongly 'feel' safe in an unsafe hazardous environment. The actions we need you to take are:

1. Identifying the hazards is the first essential step when risk assessing a work site. Access and egress arrangements for each excavation must be assessed and confirmed on your risk assessment before starting work.
2. The second step is to deal with any hazard identified. Where unsafe or potentially hazardous conditions are identified they should be dealt with and control measures introduced to reduce or eliminate the risk.
3. Where a work site is considered to be unsafe despite control measures being introduced, then you should **'Stop the Job'** and seek advice, until further control measures have been taken to reduce or preferably remove the hazard.

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To create a safe working environment it is important to review and risk assess the work site as the work progresses and conditions change. Some of the general hazards to look out for, and take account of in your risk assessment, are shown below.

| No. | Safety Guidance for working around Excavations |
|---|---|
| 1 | Make sure the signing and guarding for the site is in place at all times and that the general public are kept out of the excavation area. |
| 2 | Always consider access and egress, into and out of joint holes / trenches and make sure you always have a safe means of access / egress e.g. ladders, steps, ramps, etc. |
| 3 | Make all staff aware of the defined safe access/egress route and consider the need of multiple access /egress points and routes when carrying out the risk assessment and confirm these on the documented site risk assessment. |
| 4 | Consider if excavated spoil presents an unacceptable hazard, either from falling into the joint hole or blocking access/egress. Keep spoil clear of the excavation edges and ensure that at least one side of the excavation is free of excavated material to facilitate access. Under no circumstances should the access route be across excavated spoil, or other potential trip hazards. |
| 5 | If cutting steps into the ground, maintain step dimensions similar to normal stairs. |
| 6 | If site conditions are such that the risk of tripping is high, cease work and take corrective action. Tidy the site as far as is possible and get anything that is presenting a hazard moved out of the way or off site if necessary. Keep your site risk assessment updated if site conditions change. |
| 7 | When undertaking excavation work maintain awareness of the depth of the excavation and the requirement for shoring or sloping to prevent the sides falling in. |
| 8 | Always maintain awareness that an excavation may affect structural stability of adjacent structures and be aware of the impact that water can have on the stability of the excavation due to its ability to undermine or weaken ground structure. |
| 9 | Think about access / egress in an emergency – how would you recover a casualty? |
| 10 | Any excavation deeper than 1.2m may only be made following consultation and guidance from a deep excavation competent person. |