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Issued By: Thameslink Programme, HSEA Team, James Forbes House, 27 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS

Issue Number: TLP 025

Title: London Bridge – S&T Cable Cut (25th October 2014)

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Overview of Event:

Cables were being removed from a service riser on platform 6 of London Bridge utilising a reciprocating saw. During the activity the saw blade came into contact with one of the live S&T cables cutting through the outer and inner insulation damaging the internal cable cores. Work was stopped immediately; Network Rail S&T were contacted to examine the cable. The damage caused a fault but did not cause any delays to trains. A repair was undertaken.

The learning from a similar event resulted in the right actions being taken immediately and communication worked well, however resultant actions taken by Network Rail to understand the fault need to be understood in future events.

Diagram/Photo of event:

Inside switch room platform 6 showing mix of orange ended redundant cables and cables still in use



Underlying Causes:

- Failure to adhere to the documented safe system of work – as it had identified hand cutting where live cables had been identified.
- The task briefing didn't take into account accessibility of the cables and offer alternative methods other than referring to hand cutting - the specified list of tools for the task in the TBS stated reciprocating saw & hand tools.
- The chosen method was inherently unsafe around live cables - the close proximity of the live and redundant cables made either of the suggested removal methods in the TBS unsuitable.

Actions Taken As a Result of Investigation:

- The use of reciprocating saws to be prohibited unless there are no live services within the area.
- A hold point has been incorporated within the TBS system to review the safest method of removal for all future cable removal works carried out in close proximity to known live services.
- Alternative cutting methods e.g. ratchet cutters are being explored. Where access is limited the removal methods will be reviewed to identify the safest way (potentially using shields to protect services).
- The Supervisor involved in the incident was re-briefed about adhering to the TBS and the significance of the incident.
- Operatives involved were re-briefed, the message reinforced about the method of removal. All were encouraged to stop and challenge if the task cannot be done safely.
- A safety briefing was given to the night shift team covering what Network rail deem as a significant incident.
- The communication between the Network Rail teams and the Principal Contractor with regards to repairing the damage is being reviewed to enhance understanding.

General Key Messages:

- Methods of work including selection of the appropriate tools and equipment for the activity should be considered and documented during the planning stage
- Consideration to the protection of assets / infrastructure should be included as part of the planning and works delivery phases
- Site teams including personnel supervising the works should be aware of the significance of damage events such as this and their impact on either potential to injure people or potential to damage assets / infrastructure.
- Cable recovery processes should be in place and understood by the teams undertaking the works.