

Manhole Covers

Document No: **IW-HSQE-SA-13**

Revision:1.00

Approved By: Claire Lyons

Effective Date: 9/10/2017

1. What Happened?

A number of recent incidents involving the opening and closing of manhole covers have been reported to Irish Water.

- It was reported that an operative carrying out a leak inspection was struck on the ear lobe with a shovel while lifting a manhole cover. The operative indicated that he was lifting the manhole cover using a set of lifting eyes when the manhole cover came loose and fell. The report suggests that the manhole cover landed on a shovel which had been left lying beside the manhole. It was reported that this caused the shovel to fly into the air and strike the operative on the ear lobe as it landed.
- In a separate incident, it was reported that an operative received a serious eye injury while attempting to close a manhole cover after checking the depth of the services. The operative reported that while dropping the manhole cover back into place, the cover hit a screwdriver lying beside the manhole which had been used to open the cover. The report indicates that this caused the screwdriver to become airborne and strike the operative in the eye.
- In a separate incident, it was reported that a manhole cover slipped and fell on an operative's hand while lifting a cast iron manhole cover using his hands.

2. Immediate Actions

- Stop works onsite.
- Administer first aid and take the injured person to hospital for further treatment.
- Make area safe and carry out a full accident investigation.

3. Further Actions

- Prior to going out to site, operatives should ensure that the appropriate lifting aids are available to open and lift the manhole and chamber covers safely.
- If you discover while out on site that you do not have suitable tools to open/lift the

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manhole/chamber covers safely, you should cease works until the correct lifting tools are available. **Note:** A lot of accidents occur when the correct tools are not available and operatives improvise by using a shovel or spade for example.

- When the correct tools are available to open and lift the manhole/chamber covers, a lift assessment should be completed (TILE should be considered: Task, Individual, Load, and Environment when carrying out the lift assessment). Operatives should be trained in proper lifting techniques.
- When opening/lifting manhole/chamber covers it is important that all areas around any manholes/chambers are clear of any objects, tools, equipment etc. that could potentially cause an injury.
- Mechanical manhole lifting equipment should be used to lift heavier and more awkward covers. The process that must be followed to use this equipment safely should be documented in the task specific risk assessment.



Figure 1&2: Examples of lifting aids

SAFETY ALERT



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4. Further Information

For further information on this safety alert please contact hsqe@water.ie

5. Distribution list

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