

SAFETY ALERT



38Kv Strike

Document No: PS-HSQE-SA-68

Revision: 1.0

Approved By: Alan Morrissey

1. What Happened?

A leak repair crew, working on behalf of Uisce Éireann, struck and damaged a 38Kv underground ESB cable with an insulated crowbar. Thankfully this incident did not result in any injuries, but this potentially could have resulted in serious injury or a fatality. The incident did result in a significant outage to customers.

2. Immediate Actions

The contractor immediately made the site safe and directed all persons away from the area. The site supervisor contacted the ESB, who then arrived at site, diverted the power and commenced the repair which took approx. 24hrs. An investigation was then undertaken by the contractor and the ESB.

Upon investigation numerous findings were highlighted:

- High consequence services were not communicated by the contractor to the crew at the earliest possible stage, both prior to the works commencing and again whilst carrying out the works.
- Insufficient access to utility drawings. The operative's device (mobile phone) used to consult the drawings was badly scratched and damaged screen, making it extremely difficult to review the drawings correctly.
- The ESB were also not consulted before the dig commenced, as the crew were not aware of the potential risk below them.
- Inadequate permit procedure. The permit to dig available to the crew, was a superseded document which did not require the Supervisor's approval and therefore works commenced without the supervisor oversight.

The hand-tool used for digging in this case was insulated (a result of a safety protocol driven by the contractor in the previous months). This probably saved the life of the operative and potentially his colleagues also.

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3. Further Actions

Uisce Éireann ask that our delivery partners review works relating to underground services including the factors highlighted above to prevent reoccurrence on all Uisce Éireann Projects.

Always:

- ✓ Use safe digging methods in accordance with the HSA's Code of Practice For Avoiding Danger From Underground Services
- ✓ Consult the ESB, and other utility providers, in advance of works commencing
- ✓ Brief your personnel on your company's procedures and ensure they understand them
- ✓ Ensure that high consequence services are identified and communicated to everyone at the earliest possible stage
- ✓ Have adequate supervision in place on site
- ✓ Consult the utility drawings and keep a copy on site
- ✓ Use a cable locating device and ensure it is operated by a competent person (LUGS card holder with experience)
- ✓ Mark cable position on the ground and do so again should the markings become erased/covered
- ✓ Complete a permit to dig and ensure it is followed
- ✓ Proceed with caution and use insulated hand tools for digging around live services
- ✓ Re-scan the area at regular intervals as the excavation progresses
- ✓ Assume there are more cables than are seen on the drawings or that you have identified through scanning
- ✓ **Where there is doubt, stop and re-assess – HOLD POINT**

4. Further Information

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

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