

CONTACT WITH LIVE CABLE

Contact with a live cable during recent excavation works had high potential to cause harm to persons. On this occasion harm was prevented by implementing appropriate mitigation measures (insulated hand tools) as determined by the risk assessment.

Series of Events

The gully was being replaced due to it being defective. A desktop services study was completed prior to works, then a cable avoidance tool was used to scan for services but did not identify this cable. A risk assessment and method statement were developed and followed accordingly, including the mitigation of a CAT scanner to identify buried services. Excavation with insulated hand tools commenced, with CAT scanning carried out at regular intervals. The metal casing of a cable had corroded under the leaking gully meaning that, when disturbed, a spark was seen. All works stopped immediately, and an electrician was called.

Findings

The cable was identified to be a UKPN supply that is no longer in use, but still live – meaning it would not show up on the CAT scan but is still dangerous. Services drawings identified in the desk study were found to be out of date and no longer accurate.

Conclusion and Shared Learning

Existing/historical services drawings should never be assumed to be accurate. New drawings should be obtained prior to any excavation works, prompted by an effective permit to break ground procedure.