

# Lessons Learnt: Local & Formal Investigations



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Title: Thameslink Farringdon Project, Fractured Metacarpal

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## Picture(s)



Shaft of Sledge Hammer



Head of Sledge Hammer



Image of Metacarpal Fracture  
(note: illustration only not actual x-ray)

## Overview of Event

- An operative sustained a fractured metacarpal in his hand after the head of a sledge hammer broke away from the shaft
- At the time of the accident trench sheets were being installed by the manual dig and push / drive method.
- The manual dig and push / drive method involved one person standing in the excavation to dig away the earth to then allow the second person (the injured person) to hammer in the metal sheets from the top of the excavation.
- The operative had been using the sledge hammer for at least 30 minutes before the accident occurred
- Due to the restricted work area beneath a station platform and staircase, a mini digger had been used for the first 0.5 metre, but could not reach any further. Manual installation was then utilised for the remainder of the work.

## Underlying Causes:

There are a number of underlying factors that contributed to this accident: -

- The sledge hammer had been brought to site unofficially i.e. it had not been issued by the contractor for the project and was not part of an inspection regime.
- The operative was unaware that the head had become loose on the shaft.

## Key Message:

As a minimum, a visual check should be undertaken of hand tools before each use to ensure they are in good condition, e.g. a hammer should be checked to ensure that the head is not loose and there are no splits in the shaft.