

Lessons Learnt: Local & Formal Investigations



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Title: Gatwick 750v DC ETE cable flashover event 3rd December 2013

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Description of event

In order to provide access to a sub-station 2 sections of Palisade fencing were removed and leant against the remaining compound fencing. The fence panels were not secured in any way to prevent them from falling or being moved.

At some point over the following weeks one section of fence was moved again; only this time it was left resting on a 750v DC ETE cable.

Later in the programme operatives running signal tail cables saw a flash and the above damage was discovered – one of the fence panels had pierced the insulation of the 750v DC ETE cable, resulting in arcing and burning and damage to the panel.

Examples of control measures:

Before storing equipment in the vicinity of surface cables ensure that they do not sit on top of the cables

Wherever possible carry out the work when the cables/ services are isolated or disconnected.

If possible move the cables temporarily **without damaging them** from the area where work is to be carried out when isolated.

Protect existing cables with inverted trough, supported timber sheets or use cable/hose protection ramps.

Lessons Learnt

Reinforce the life saving rules.

Always ensure that when storing fencing panels that they are secured and not stored on top of Power cables

Always treat cables as live until proved otherwise.

Undertake a site survey and risk assessment to identify all risks associated with work near to all cables/ services/obstructions

Never rely on insulation as being 100% safe

Raise a permit to work identifying where the cables/ services/ obstruction are in relation to the work.

Detail in the Task Briefing Sheet the risks and identify any control measures. Include accurate drawings/ photographs of the area.

Wherever possible the cables/ services are protected or the obstructions removed before work commences

Consider using temporary warning signage