

Lessons Learnt from a Significant Event



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Issued By: Thameslink Programme, HSEA Team, James Forbes House, 27 Great Suffolk Street, London, SE1 0NS

Issue Number: TLP002

Title: London Bridge Station Redevelopment, GRP Tower Collapse – 28th Nov 2012

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Overview of Event

Two operatives were working from a Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) Tower, erecting high level lightweight formwork panels. During this task the working platform of the GRP tower gave way. One of the Platform claws (see picture), that connects to the 4 rung end frame sheared and broke off.

The platform did not completely fall off but did twist with the weight of the operatives who were working from the platform. The operatives managed to hang on to the edge protection and did not fall from the tower. One operative got his knee caught between the twisted platform and the diagonal brace however no injury was sustained.

The tags were removed from the GRP towers and all works on GRP towers around site were replaced with alternative access equipment. The manufacturer collected the GRP tower for inspection, however to date no information has been received from them on the failure causation.

Underlying Causes:

There are a number of underlying facts that contributed to the accident: -

- Equipment Selection / WPP / Task Brief – it was not necessary to use GRP Towers, Aluminium Towers or Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPS) could have been selected, however the exact type was not stipulated on the WPP or Task Brief.
- Equipment Ownership / Management – it was not clear who owned the equipment and it was not clear whether the mandatory Provision and Use of Work Equipment (PUWER) inspections had been undertaken for the tower.
- Inspection Process – following previous events the daily inspection process agreed had not been followed, however it was considered the visual inspections would not have identified damage / fault inside the component.

Pictures(s)

Photographs show the failure points



Key Message:

- GRP access equipment is **not** to be used on the Thameslink Programme unless it can be demonstrated by risk assessment that alternative access equipment would not be suitable for the task. In such instances usage must be endorsed by the relevant Network Rail Project Director.
- Plant / equipment ownership on site to be reviewed to ensure the necessary inspections are being undertaken
- WPPs / Task Briefings should where practicable be specific on the access equipment to be used on site
- Preservation of evidence is critical to understanding equipment failure
- Whilst the combined weight of the two operatives and equipment were within the safe working limits of the platform – the combined weight of equipment / persons and type of activity should always be considered when selecting access equipment