

Shared Learning

The Thameslink Programme

Issue Date: 25 May 2018 - For further info contact sharon.fink@networkrail.co.uk

Issue Number: TLP 091 Title: Work at Height

Overview of Event:

Six work at height events occurred between January and March 2018 on the London Bridge Station Redevelopment Project which resulted in a number of significant events being declared and ultimately a wider investigation on whether there was systemic failures occurring in relation to the planning, delivery and / or supervision of works that involved work at height.

This shared learning focuses on three of the six events which were :

- Stainer Street (29/03/2018) – an operative clambered from a scissor lift into the soffit to sit on CMS frames to carry out the fixing of GRC brackets. This contravened the safe working method established in his WPP and TBS.
- Leisure unit 02, Tooley Street (13/04/2018) – an operative chose to stand on the mid-rail of a podium step to complete a short duration task knowing he was breaking the local rules related to work at height.
- Mark & Spencer retail unit (16/04/2018) – an operative used a powered access platform to reach top area of large walk-in fridges, an area that was not made safe for work at height.

General Key Messages:

- If areas cannot be reached safely then operatives must stop and question how the work is to be undertaken.
- Planning of works must identify where clashes exist so that the appropriate access equipment can be planned.
- Access requirements must be included in the resources / controls of the associated paperwork i.e. Work Package Plans.
- Supervisors must make sure that appropriate access equipment is provided for the tasks to be undertaken.
- Supervisors must undertake a point of work risk assessment to make sure that risks are reviewed and appropriate controls implemented including any alternative access equipment required.

Causes:

A number of issues emerged which included clashes with design, briefings on tasks and individual behaviours. The key findings were: -

- Communicating safe work practices both verbally and in written format has been made more difficult for personnel whose first language is not English. Translators are used to disseminate information however, through questioning the level of information is “dumbed” down therefore missing key elements.
- Phasing of works has been critical. Congested / partially blocked roof spaces within Cable Management System has led personnel to deviate from the safe system of work to get the job done. The issue is of phasing and not of design.
- Personnel have highlighted “getting the job done” and “programme pressures”. This has been at odds with the clear message that works deemed unsafe should not be commenced.
- Consistent levels of supervision are not being seen across all elements of works. Operatives involved in working at Height breaches regularly make knowledge-based mistakes.
- A review of sampled TBS shows a limited understanding of the risk assessment process and using controls identified in an assessment to formulate a robust work plan. The use of a Point of Work Risk Assessment (POWRA) has gone some way in reducing risk, however, the quality of some POWRA assessments is substandard.

Actions Taken As a Result of the Investigations:

- The whole site was stood down and small teams were part of a two-way engagement on programme vs. safety on the project.
- Supervisors to attend workshop in risk perception and management of foreseeable risks. There will be a work at height video presented to all supervisors.
- A proposal to include antecedents/prompts in the form of pictograms in TBS for non-English speaking operatives to assist in identifying safe systems of work for work at height.
- Current TBS that involve work at height to be reviewed to see that they adequately cover work at height control and that local inherent issues have been identified and risk mitigated.
- Supervisors to ensure that specific risks that are not captured in the TBS are completed on a POWRA.
- A toolbox talk is to be generated that covers work at height which will be provided to all suppliers for briefing.
- All supervisors to attend and watch a Network Rail work at height video to show what can happen when things have gone wrong when working at height.