Long portable earths for 25kV OLE Isolations

Issued to: All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors
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Contact: Rakesh Althukattu, Engineer - Contact Systems

Overview

Following an isolation audit, it has become apparent that the industry is continuing to use the non-interlocked variant of long portable earths for earthing overhead line equipment.

At Ranskill in 1998 a member of the isolation team received a fatal electric shock when removing a non-interlocked long portable earth.

Investigation revealed the incident involved the failure to follow procedures detailed in Network Rail standard NR/L3/ELP/29987. To increase safety, after the incident the interlocked long portable earth was introduced to eliminate the risk associated with the application and removal of non-interlock variants.

Immediate action required

- Long portable earths shall only be used to earth isolated overhead line equipment when justified in accordance with NR/L3/ELP/29987.
- Non-interlocked long portable earths must not be used for earthing overhead line equipment after 31/01/2019. Only Product Approved interlocked long portable earths with warning labels at the G Clamp end shall be used for this purpose.
- Long portable earths shall be procured in accordance with the conditions on the Network Rail Product Acceptance certificate, PA05/00944.
- All Nominated and Authorised Persons shall be re-briefed on the process of applying and removing long portable earths. Long portable earths must be applied and removed in the following sequence:
  a. When applying long portable earths, the earth connection shall be made before the line end is connected to the overhead line equipment
  b. When removing long portable earths, the overhead line connection shall always be removed before the earth end is broken.

Copies of Safety Advice are available on Safety Central.