

RIDDOR Burn Injury – Use of hedge trimmer

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors**

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Location: Glendrissaig, Girvan

Contact: Gillian Murphy, Senior Communications Manager
gillian.murphy@networkrail.co.uk



Overview

On 23 August 2018, a five-person team, including two supervisors, were carrying out vegetation clearance tasks on a steep embankment utilising rope access.

A petrol driven hedge trimmer was being used to cut light brush. After 3-4 minutes the equipment was placed on the embankment where it ignited.

The flames spread to the operative's right leg causing a significant burn.

The investigation revealed that fuel leaked from the hedge trimmer whilst in use. There was no visible damage to the equipment but, the fuel cap was found 2-3 metres away.

All workers and supervisors on site were aware that the operative was not trained to use the equipment.

The injured person required hospital treatment for a duration of 5 days and 23 days recovery time in total.

Underlying causes

- The injured person had not been trained to operate the equipment
- The fuel cap was not attached / correctly attached to the hedge trimmer
- The IP had been permitted to use the hedge trimmer previously at site under supervision
- The lifesaving rule breach went unchallenged by both supervisors and workers on site

Key message

Consider the following on your sites:

How is visibility of workforce competence provided on sites to enable safe and appropriate allocation of resources?

What are the requirements for storage, checks and safe handling of equipment on site?

What are supervisors' safety responsibilities on site? How are these assessed?

To prevent recurrence:

Never undertake any job unless you have been trained and assessed as competent

Regardless of your role, be prepared to challenge Life Saving Rule breaches

All Safety Communications are available at [Safety Central](#)