



## Test before Touch on OLE

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

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Never assume equipment is isolated  
– always test before touch.

## Overview

The investigation into a worker's severe burns at Wolverton has revealed that there is uncertainty across the industry about what is required by the Test before Touch lifesaving rule on Overhead Line Equipment (OLE).

The accident occurred in the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021 when track renewal contractors were working in a Network Rail managed engineering worksite at Wolverton. The work group were checking and adjusting the OLE to remove a temporary speed restriction.

The work group using a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) unknowingly strayed outside the isolation. A linesperson touched the live OLE when they used a tool to take a measurement and received burns from an electric shock of up to 25kV.

The Test before Touch life saving rule must be followed when working on or near OLE. Every time before anyone works less than 600mm from the OLE a test must be conducted or witnessed using an approved voltage testing device. A new test is required every time the work group moves past any in-line feature such as a section insulator or changes track. If in doubt, re-test.

The test must show that the OLE is switched off before the work (re)starts.

Never rely only on the Reminder of Live Exposed (RoLE) equipment alone. It is used at the OLE permit (Form C) safe working limits but not always for residual electrical hazards. And it is only a reminder to check the OLE permit (Form C).

## Discussion Points

When working on or near OLE, Test before Touch must be carried out.

How Test before Touch is to be performed and who is responsible to carry out the test(s) must be identified during the planning process. The following must be considered:

- Test before Touch must only be done once you have an OLE Permit to Work (Form C).
- Test before Touch on OLE must be carried out by an Authorised or Nominated Person.
- An Authorised or Nominated Person must retest if the work group moves beyond an in-line OLE feature, onto a different track or a different conductor or if requested by a member of the work group.
- If the work group does not have a competent person to carry out Test before Touch then the Nominated Person must plan for how this will be carried out throughout the work.
- All staff should use Test before Touch in accordance with the guide to the Application of the Electrical Lifesaving Rules.
- How do you reach a clear and common understanding regarding the safe working limits stated on the OLE Permit (Form C)?
- How are the safe working limits on the OLE Permit (Form C) identified?