

Lifting Operations Incident

Overview

On the 20th July, two operatives working on behalf of Balfour Beatty at Switch Island Road works improvement scheme were constructing a manhole brace frame (temporary excavation support) prior to transporting it to site. The IP (a slinger) was releasing a lifting chain from a 3 metre waler rail when they were struck by the second rail causing fractures to bones in their ankle.

Both rails had been lifted from a laydown area using a wheeled excavator then been rigged with two chains to lifting eyes located on the rail ends. The rails were then lifted vertically into position but did not land in parallel to each other as planned, with one positioned over the other (as below). In an attempt to rectify the situation, the IP stood between the two rails to release one chain. This caused the top rail to shift abruptly from its position, swing round and strike the back of their ankle.



Main Findings

Although the lifting operation had been planned earlier, activities on site had made the work area congested. Additional pre-start checks should have been undertaken to ensure sufficient space and access arrangements.

Supervision had not assured that Safe Systems of Work were appropriate for the intended task prior to works commencing. Poor housekeeping standards were accepted in the location of the lift, and the supervisors failed to check on progress against the planned works.

Golden rule No.4, 'Stop work if anything changes' was not observed/ applied. Decisions were made by the lifting team to deviate from agreed standard working practices.

Actions

- Poor housekeeping on site will introduce hazards and increase risks to safety; if you spot unsafe conditions on site report them immediately.
- Ensure lifting plans are in place and have been approved and briefed by the site supervisor prior to works.
- Ensure the ground area is clear of obstruction and items being lifted can be landed without difficulty.
- Never attempt to unslung a lifting chain attached to equipment that has not fully landed.
- If you are unsure of the task being undertaken or something changes STOP WORK!! and seek further advice from your site supervisor and site manager.
- Remember you must always Report all unsafe acts and conditions. "See it, report it".