

HI-POTENTIAL NEAR MISS FALL HAZARD FROM AN OPEN BORE HOLE



Background

Following the successful completion of our contracted works on the Exeter project we demobilized and left site on the 28/4/19.

On the 01/04/19 the client reported that whilst the groundworker was conducting clearing works they uncovered an open bore that was approximately 750mm wide X 8.5m deep. Fortunately, nobody was injured as a result of this near miss, and the area was cordoned off making it safe.

Incident details

It was reported that due to a change in the design regarding the position of the crane base piles there was delay in the installation of the piles. Because of this change, the 750mm augers were drilled into the ground (rat hole) close to the potential position of the piles.

Whilst the change was being reviewed, Other works continued the project at a different location using 600mm augers. After the design change was approved, the augers were removed from the rat hole and then utilised to install the crane base piles.

The rat hole was not considered as part of the final clean up and demobilization from site.



Findings

Following the investigation into this near miss / incident the findings are as follows:

- Due to the change in the design this caused a delay in the overall completion date. To make the time up the team worked longer days resulting in them working in the evenings and poorer lighting conditions. No artificial lighting was installed to compensate for the change in lighting.
- There were issues relating to fatigue.
- Transport was booked for the Thursday 28/3/19 to remove all the remaining equipment and tooling so there was a push to complete all works before this date.
- When the 750mm auger was removed from the rat hole, one of the crane base positions was close by, it is likely the arisings from this position covered the rat hole.
- Prior to demobilization there did not appear to be an effective post completion audit of the working area.
- Communication at the start of shift, end of shift discussions between the site team, project engineer and the foreman was not effective in remembering there was an open rat hole on site.
- It was reported the agency project engineer spoke broken English and this may have been a contributing factor in poor communication between the project team.
- There was no confirmation that rat holes are included in the permit to dig.

Recommendations

Following this high potential near miss / incident, the following actions have been undertaken:

- The CFA RAMS will be reviewed and include a section on drilling and backfilling rat holes.
- Once daily works have been completed the site teams are to ensure a thorough review of the works area is undertaken that includes a final visual check of any previous installed positions / rat holes to ensure they have been suitably backfilled, marked up or barriered off.
- Consideration should be given to ensure that rat holes are located within the piling platform / approved permit to dig area.
- Rat holes must be drilled at least 4 x width away from the pile position if they can't be drilled into the final position.
- Pile arisings next to pile positions should be cleared before we demobilize and leave site.
- Before appointing subcontract agency staff, we must ensure that provisions have been made for language barriers.
- Consider what currencies are present when undertaking your work.

