

## Protection of the public from exposed cables

In 2008, an 8-year old child from the Kingston–Upon-Hull area, suffered minor burns with one of our underground street lighting cables which was exposed at the time and subsequently faulted as a result of the child's interference with it. The investigation team identified a number of areas where controls required improvement or reinforcement and in particular identified a need to reinforce application of the Company's requirements with regard to the blinding of exposed underground cables. A subsequent widespread review of compliance undertaken to date has highlighted that those requirements are still not being properly or consistently implemented. This newsflash aims to provide a reminder of the requirements.

*DSS/026 Policy for the Installation of Distribution Power Cables (Section 3.2.7)* and the company's Operational Practice Manual (OPM) (*Section WC 1.4*) in particular clearly state the requirement for cables to be "**blinded**" or "**otherwise protected**" as soon as practicable to prevent danger or interference.

From a practical point of view, and subject to full or partial ground reinstatement being undertaken, the application of blinding (stone free soil, sand or ground crusher run limestone) is always the preferred option when seeking to guard against cable interference, as this hides the cable from public view and affords a degree of mechanical protection to the cable. Tile tape should also be applied above the cable to warn of the presence of a buried cable below should future ground work be undertaken over the cables.

Where the aforementioned measures are considered to be impracticable consideration must be given to what is the most appropriate risk control measure (or measures) to be adopted so as to ensure the live cables are protected. Control measures should be selected in accordance with the following hierarchy:-

Control measures	Examples of practical solutions
Remove/isolate the hazard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Temporarily cover the cable with sand or graded spoil</li><li>• Cover cables with sandbags to hide the cable and facilitate access to cable at a later stage.</li><li>• Apply robust and well secured trench covers over the excavation to hide the cable from view</li><li>• Fabricate temporary matting from tile tape sections and secure in place over the cable(s)</li></ul>
Reduce the period of exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep the duration that the cable is exposed to an absolute minimum, in order to reduce the likelihood of interference</li><li>• Avoid interruption to the continuation of works by planning for completion of works in the same day.</li></ul>
Obstruct/Restrict access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use secure fencing (such as "HERAS" type fencing) to unauthorised restrict access</li></ul>
Warn off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain an on-site worker presence to discourage interference</li><li>• implement a manned, intermittent or around the clock security watch and/or patrol</li><li>• Apply signage / protective sheeting to the cable and/or immediate locality to warn of the danger. NB - This type of control should only be considered as a supplementary control to be applied alongside control measures as detailed above</li></ul>

Clearly each situation will require consideration of the site specific risks and the suitability/ sufficiency of available risk control measures. However, to be clear, with immediate effect and without exception-

**No underground cable may be left exposed and accessible to the public without justifiable cause supported by documentary evidence to show thorough consideration of the associated risks and the availability of appropriate control**

**This Newsflash must be given the widest possible circulation, with personal copies issued by managers to all appropriate staff**