

ASP Safety Alert

ASP Compliance and Practices



Alert Number: SA11_17

Subject: Damage to 33kV UG cable and unauthorised work

24 August 2017

Key Messages

ASPs are reminded to positively identify underground cables and must use appropriate excavation techniques outlined in NS156

ASPs are to ensure workers and subcontractors are trained and authorised

Whilst machine excavating to expose two (2) 33kV cables, encased in stabilised sand, the excavator bucket hit and damaged one of the cables. At the time of the incident the cable was isolated and under an Access Permit to minimise any electrical hazards to workers.

Due to the hardness of the stabilised sand, the work crew decided to revert from vacuum and hand excavation to machine excavation alongside the cable. The investigation determined the workers had not positively identified the conduit and cable within the stabilised sand. The cable was assumed to be in full length conduit, however it transitioned to direct buried, and therefore the resultant damage was more severe.

As per Ausgrid's NS156 *Working Near or Around Underground Cables*, machine excavating cannot occur within **150mm** to the side of cables. The ASP1's SWMS did not note these requirements.



Picture: trench with conduits encased with stabilised sand



Picture: damaged 33kV underground cable



Picture: repaired 33kV underground cable

It was also revealed the excavator operator did not have current ASP1 authorisation, as the work being undertaken involved working near the network i.e. any work that raises or lowers the surface level above cables or conduits, and 300mm (distribution) and 2,000mm (transmission) either side of cables. The Team Leader and work crew did not adhere to Ausgrid's ES4 *Service Provider Authorisation* or the ASP1's SWMS and risk assessment for workers to be trained and authorised.

ASP1s are reminded to adhere to Ausgrid's safety requirements during excavations and ensure their workers and subcontracted workers are adequately trained and authorised.

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Project Officers