

HSE Bulletin 44 in 2019

Appropriate risk assessments and safe systems of work to be in place prior to works being started

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Background

An incident occurred recently where a TfL contractor suffered a fractured metatarsal in their left foot. They were using a hand breaker weighing 12.9kg to trim a section of concrete trench wall with limited work space and restricted access. Whilst operating the tool, the breaker accidentally slid and the pick point punctured their boot just above the protective toe cap.



The hazards in the particular working environment were not identified. Had a risk assessment of the task been carried out, then a different approach to the task would have been taken using alternative methodology and additional PPE.

What did the contractor do in this instance?

Due to the location of the work alternate methods could not be used. The existing method statement and risk assessment were reviewed and updated to include additional metatarsal foot protection (metatarsal protection is designed to protect the upper portion of the foot) and work methodology (to trim the wall as you break out to avoid working on long vertical surfaces). The operatives were briefed on the new safe system of work.

Instruction

1. Prior to work taking place make sure that the risk assessments identify the significant risks of the task and the safe system of work is updated.
2. Make sure that the controls and safe systems of work for the task are in place and communicated to those carrying out the task.
3. Ensure safe methods of working are adopted, suitable tooling and plant is used and that staff are trained in its use.
4. Some hazards may still remain and these should be controlled so the risk is as low as reasonably practicable with PPE always being used as a last line of defence.
5. Encourage people to report uncontrolled hazards, near hits and to always report accidents and injuries so that lessons can be learned which will make the task safer in the future.

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