

Electricity Industry National Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HESAC) Update

February 2023



Introduction

The National HESAC last met on 9th February 2023 to discuss both Electricity Industry Health and Safety issues. This briefing summarises the key issues discussed.

A summary includes:

- Latest developments regarding COVID-19 – Broadly companies are managing as part of BAU
- Powering Improvement update – 2023 Promoting a positive health and safety culture with work progressing well
- National HESAC Terms of Reference and appointment of new chair and new representation from Trade Unions including affirmed commitment from Energy UK (Generation and Retail sector).
- Industry issues raised for wider discussion on items such as: Lone Working and Violence; EU Retained Law Reform Bill; and Hybrid Working

Key Issues Discussed

COVID 19

- It was felt that cases had significantly decreased. Member companies were no longer seeing issues with COVID-19 and believe they are now reaping more positives than negatives from long standing controls, procedures and policies implemented during the pandemic and post pandemic period.
- ENA will create and circulate a high-level document to summarise the work conducted at industry level throughout the COVID-19 pandemic capturing significant learnings.
- It was agreed by the Chair and Trade Union representatives that a close meeting for COVID-19 was not needed, but would be addressed on the main HESAC as and when necessary.

Powering Improvement

- ENA welcomes feedback that can be fed into the PI corporate memory section of its website to support further sharing of industry knowledge and learning points from historic safety incidents. Staff encouraged to promote corporate memory through regular engagements at Local HESAC and escalate through appropriate communication channels.
- The Powering Improvement Steering Group has developed a delivery plan for the next focus area of the strategy on 'promoting a positive health and safety culture' throughout 2023. The delivery plan

has been launched and a 'PI Culture Subgroup' has been established involving representatives from all Network businesses with TU support, input and added representation.

- The subgroup first met in November 2022 with a view to continue to meet once every two months to support the delivery of the key proposed outputs of the 2023 Delivery Plan. This work will be continued throughout 2023 and the outputs delivered on priority of value added.
- Chris Burchell (Managing Director of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Distribution) is the Powering Improvement Champion and will be speaking at ENAs SHE Management Conference on the 24th and 25th May 2023 in Dublin, hosted by ESB Networks.

Lone Working and Violence

- Companies and TUs are looking to pull together a collaborative brief on Lone Working and the potential for violence for the energy sector as a whole.

EU Retained Law Reform Bill

- The impacts of the bill will be to set a default that most of the UK's EU-derived law will automatically expire at the end of 2023, including large amounts of health and safety law as well as grant Ministers wide powers and

streamlined mechanisms to revoke, revise or replace any retained EU law, or extend its life (to a date no later than June 2026). Member companies, TUs and the HSE have committed to keeping a track of changes and monitoring where it will affect safety throughout the industry

PI SHE Bulletins (click to expand)



Identification and demarcation requirements for work on the System

There has been a recent incident elsewhere in the UK industry where a worker received a serious electric shock and burn injuries when they accessed a live transformer instead of an adjacent transformer that had been made safe and released under a permit for work.

Additionally, a recent compliance audit within the DNO found personnel stepping under/over the double rope barrier of a safe working area. This is an unacceptable practice.

This bulletin is to remind everyone of the demarcation requirements when apparatus is being worked on.

Danger notices on live adjacent apparatus / Permanent identification on Apparatus



Recommendations and action points

- When preparing for work or testing always consider the possibility of mistaking live apparatus as being the apparatus which has been made safe
- Always ensure the apparatus to be worked on is identifiable
- Ensure you are aware of the requirements of and positioning of Danger Notices on adjacent live apparatus
- When issuing a safety document the SAP must identify the apparatus and ensure the recipient understands the document contents including what apparatus is to be worked on
- The safety document recipient must ensure that the working party also understand
- Never step under/over the double ropes defining a safe work area or the single rope of the access route in a substation. If necessary to allow access to another area of the site, the SAP should allow for this in the positioning of the safe work area.

Ensure you are working in accordance at all times with a company approved procedure/ Safety Rules (Electrical and Mechanical), setting down the requirements in those situations where it is necessary to protect personnel carrying out work in substations with exposed High Voltage (HV) conductors from Danger which may be outside the safe work area.



Loss of Life following Fall from Height

Overview

A contractor colleague working in the Utilities sector for a water company has died following a fall from height while cleaning a roof gully on a property.

The contractor and the Health and Safety Executive are currently investigating the incident.

Working at height is one of the biggest causes of death and major injury.

This sad event is a stark reminder to consider the risks associated with working at height and the importance of putting sensible and proportionate measures in place to manage them before work starts.

It is necessary to implement the requirements of the Work at Height (WAH) Regulations hierarchy consistently such that prior to carrying out any work, each activity is subject to the overarching principles to:

- Avoid the WAH activity;
- Prevent any fall from height arising from the work;
- Mitigate the effects of any fall should it occur.

All employees should have a clear understanding of the WAH hierarchy and routes for its effective application. They must have the authority and responsibility to implement the appropriate method taking into account the hierarchy, the activity to be undertaken, the environment and the weather conditions at the time of work, they must also regularly practice the skills required.

Key Points to Remember

- Incidents occur when control measures fail
- Carry out all tasks in accordance with Code of Practice
- Adopt the Hierarchy at all times and wherever possible, avoid working at height in the first place
- Plan to minimise the risk of a fall if working at height is unavoidable:
 - Consider the use of MEWPs
 - Consider using tower scaffolds
 - Consider using fixed guard rails
- Minimise the distance and/or consequences of a fall
 - Use industrial-grade rope
 - Use a fall arrest system

Please use to generate discussion during team briefs or Local HESACs

PI SHE Bulletins (click to expand)



Stored Energy Incident

Incident

Whilst carrying out tree cutting activities using 7 attached insulated rods with a saw attached, the rods have fallen from the vertical work position after cutting a peg and landed on a rhododendron bush. Whilst attempting to lift the extended rod out of the bush and back into the working position the connection point in rod number two failed and the top of rod number one struck the tree cutter in the face causing a cut injury above the eye. The IP attended hospital where the wound was cleaned and closed using steri strips.



Operative Injury

Actions

- Prior to carrying out any rod operations, ensure the rods are visually inspected and if any defects are detected do not use them, quarantine and report to your manager.
- Consider lifting techniques to limit pressure on the rods and consider the impact of 'Stored Energy'
- If your rods come to rest at a lower position, **rods are to be reduced to a maximum of 4 before lifting vertically and rebuilding.**

Key Initial Learnings for information.

Following the incident, the work methodology has been reviewed with regard to the number of rods that can be safely lifted from the horizontal position. As a temporary measure, the individual company has determined that only a maximum of four interconnected rods can be lifted at any one time. Additional rods should only be added with the rod combination in the elevated position.

Newly designed insulated rods –specific to arb work –are currently being trialled. The new rods have been designed with a more robust connection system, structural improvements to increase rod strength and durability, along with design alterations to the cutting head attachment point.

The use of safety spectacles along with a safety visor has also been implemented. Previously, there was only the requirement to wear a protective face visor.



Wall Collapse

Incident

Whilst carrying out a planned fault repair, a garden wall adjacent to a trench excavation collapsed into the trench. Two joiners were working in the excavation at the time. One employee was taken to hospital with a fractured pelvis and a dislocated hip.



- Batter the excavation sides to a safe angle, where possible
- Ensure excavated material is stored at least the depth of the excavation away from the side
- Check that excavations do not undermine the foundations of nearby buildings or walls. Review if extra support is required, if you are not sure, use your licence and escalate
- Do not park plant and vehicles close to the sides of excavation, the extra loading can make the sides of excavations more likely to collapse!
- Prior to entering excavations carry out checks to ensure they are safe to access and have not been impacted by weather events.

Please use to generate discussion during team briefs or Local HESACs

ENA Progress Update

SHE Committee

In November 2022, ENAs Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Committee undertook a review of its key risk priorities and its working group structure. This included rationalising ENAs existing working group structure of around twenty-five working groups and task forces to a more streamlined set of sub committees and only key strategic working groups remaining to deliver specific tasks. The key risk priorities have been agreed for 2023 and will be now delivered through six key sub committees which will effectively report directly into ENAs SHE Committee, these are:

- Operational (Electrical) Safety Committee
- Occupational Safety Committee
- Occupational Health Committee
- Public Safety Committee
- Environment Committee
- Training and Competency Committee

ENA Health and Safety Management Conference

- ENA helps arrange the SHE Management Conference on behalf of the Energy Industry, which is hosted by one of the electricity network companies and is ENA's main annual health and safety conference and networking event. In 2023 ESB Networks will be hosting the event at the Croke Park Stadium in Dublin on Thursday 25th May

- The conference theme will be 'Organisational Culture' and this theme will be addressed through dedicated sessions covering the Safety, Occupational Health, and Environmental Culture needed within the electricity sector.

Public Safety

- ENAs Public Safety Committee is looking to host a further Public Safety Stakeholder event in 2023 which leads on from a successful workshop held on 1st November 2022. The aim is to further promote public safety advice to key influential third parties and stakeholders across the UK to remind of the dangers of underground utility asset strikes and to seek support and guidance on how to improve the promoting of best practice safe digging principles.
- Through ENAs Communications Team, a campaign was launched during the winter (November - January) known as the 'Winter Readiness Campaign' which promoted messaging around the dangers of interfering willfully with the electricity and gas network. ENA is eager to engage with the public to highlight the significant dangers posed by interfering illegally with electricity and gas assets.

Occupational Health

- ENA member representatives and Energy UK company representatives agreed a series of industry health outputs Healthy Workplaces Framework 2021-2023, which is a three-year Committee policy and work plan. Progress on delivery of the annual objectives will be monitored. This includes individual company and

collective work and actions in support of key industry health risks and opportunities (COVID, mental health, fatigue, health management, health and wellbeing, and health communications).

- The Committee is looking to establish a project with the support of Hull University to develop a Fatigue Risk Management Toolkit for line managers and field operational staff.
- The group are also keen to progress with an update and refresh of the ENA Occupational Health Roadmap which is hosted on the Powering Improvement web site. The group are also looking to develop a central occupational health communications plan, which will map out monthly themes and national health initiatives and campaigns for the Committee to collectively promote and in support of company health programmes.
- A health data reporting template is being developed for use in 2023 to enable future health reporting and benchmarking between the businesses, building on the previous industry model used to report health data between 2014-2020.

Trade Union Update

The trade unions in the last quarter continue to work on priority issues including fatigue, inspections and accident investigations.

Lone working and violence

- Since the last National HESAC meeting, where there was a discussion of violence faced by members of staff, reps working for a DNO have been working with the employer to address and revise the company policy on lone working. Discussions have addressed lone working where staff attend potentially dangerous situations, ranging from violence and abuse from customers through to the growing requirement to attend cannabis farms, usually to address bypassed meters.
- Prospect has also produced some principles which the union believes all electricity industry employees are entitled to and that all employers should adopt and incorporate into their workplace arrangements.

Home and hybrid working

- Reps continue to be involved in discussions around home and hybrid working, both supporting individual members and working with the employer to improve policies and procedures and their practical application.
- Some reps report that employers are very good at supplying DSE equipment and making useful updates to risk assessments so they address items like mobile phones and tablets. Others report problems with accessing basic equipment for safely working at home.

Communication

- Unions have reviewed communication following the pandemic and considered ways to improve engagement and information sharing in the sector. As part of this process and in response to feedback from reps, targeted bulletins have been developed to supply reps with useful information and the key messages from National HESAC.
- Prospect has also established a health and safety working group for its energy sector, which spans generation, transmission and distribution, and nuclear research and decommissioning. It was established to better facilitate the sharing of information and best practice, and help improve communications between national and company levels, including national and company HESACs. The aim has been to ensure that health and safety reps feel better connected and equipped to contribute to the national work of the unions.

Events

- As part of efforts to aid communication, unions continue hold events for reps and members. For example, Prospect will hold its biennial health and safety conference on 25 April 2023, which will consider the fiftieth anniversary of the Health and Safety at Work Act and its contemporary relevance and utility. It is open to reps from the across the union, but as part of the overarching theme will consider priority issues for the electricity industry, including fatigue, culture and mental health.

Training

- Trade unions train large numbers of health and safety reps. The pandemic forced these courses moved online. While delivering online training allowed the unions to reach and train more reps, and suited the learning style of many, some expressed a preference for these to resume in person, given the benefits that come with face-to-face interaction and learning. As a result, these courses have again resumed in-person in some areas.
- Unions are also considering other ways to develop reps' skills and confidence, building upon the training provided through the level 1 health and safety courses. For example, Prospect has also recently developed an online course which will be rolled out in 2023 to support reps in engaging with their employer.

EU Retained Law Reform Bill

- There was a brief discussion of the EU Retained Law (Reform and Revocation) Bill at the last National HESAC meeting, where it was agreed the committee would keep the progress of the bill under review.
- The TUC has submitted evidence to the bill committee, among other things, and Prospect has produced a briefing on the bill drawing on the experience of members working for the HSE and ONR.

Energy UK Update

Energy UK has established its H&S Forum. Further updates to be given in due course.

- Energy UK has launched its Health & Safety Sub-committee, following key decisions made on the future of the association's health and safety work. This sub-committee seeks to promote and develop health and safety standards across Energy UK's membership. Also facilitated is the sharing of information on best practice, incidents and other health and safety issues. Further, this sub-committee develops and drives Energy UK's health and safety policy positions, advocacy, and campaigns.
- The Health & Safety Sub-committee seeks to maintain contacts with external health and safety working groups and the HSE. This external engagement currently includes the ongoing relationship with, and participation in, the National HESAC. The Energy UK Health & Safety Sub-committee met initially in December 2022 and next meets in the coming weeks where it will discuss matters such as future items of work and external engagement. The National HESAC will receive further updates as the sub-committee's work progresses.

Conclusion

We hope that this is a useful overview of the issues considered by national HESAC and welcome feedback from local Committees, both on the detail of local initiatives and on any additional items that you believe we should address.

For further information on the items within this briefing, a full set of minutes of the meeting held 9th February can be found on the Powering Improvement website - www.poweringimprovement.org/national-hesac/

We welcome feedback on these points.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of National HESAC is TBC.

Jamie Reeve

Secretary to National HESAC

Energy Networks Association