

Safety Bulletin



Broken leg sustained following fall down a railway cutting

It has recently been reported that a vegetation management team member has sustained a broken leg while undertaking roped access work clearing brambles and regrowth at the top of a railway cutting. A two man team was tasked with removing vegetation from the top of the cutting to provide a safe pathway for access for a second team to follow behind. They were working from a rope access system secured to the boundary fence. The system was designed to allow around 1m reach on each restraint rope, and required a minimum single point of connection via a carabiner at any time. All equipment and anchor points had been inspected. All team members were wearing full PPE.

Following the return to work after a lunch break the 2 man team were working roughly 10m apart when one team member realised his colleague was no longer in the expected position. At this point he heard shouting and established his colleague had fallen to the bottom of the cutting. The response plan involved initial first aid, a line blockage, and the attendance of the emergency services.

The injured party is currently in hospital, with the incident under fuller investigation. Initial evidence suggests the accident was caused as a result of being temporarily unsecured from the rope access/restraint system.

Initial learning points are considering issues including; secondary briefings being carried out prior to the return to work after breaks, additional site supervision that can maintain visual contact with work teams and review the system of work being undertaken, and additional information in work packages to ensure and demonstrate complete understanding of work methods of individual teams and sites.

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