



PROGRAMMED

SAFETY ALERT

252 – Gas Strike Incident

Background

Recently two PFM contractors were undertaking a water main repair. Whilst conducting excavations using a mechanical excavator, they hit the gas main, damaging the pipe and creating a gas leak releasing a large volume of gas.

Workers attempted to 'plug' and fix the gas main despite not being authorised to do so. They did this by using a stainless-steel clamp to cover the opening, a practice they normally use to repair water leaks in water mains. The workers ensured an exclusion zone was set up, then continued to repair the burst water main.

PFM was not notified of the incident, and WorkSafe Victoria were also not immediately notified. PFM only discovered the incident when a member of the public complained of smell of gas in the location.

Safety Issues

- The contractors performed a repair task on the gas main that they were not authorised to complete.
- The employees continued performing the water burst repair even though there was a gas leak in the work area, further introducing additional hazards.
- Failure to have the gas leak repaired correctly could have resulted in a significant incident if an ignition source had been introduced to area prior to full and proper repair.
- PFM gas strike reporting process was not followed, and workers also did not notify their company Director.
- Contractors did not follow Programmed's Safe Work Essential – Every Job Every Time and Stop and Report when this incident occurred.
- Gas strike / release incidents are deemed notifiable incidents in Victoria and the contractor failed to immediately notify WorkSafe. The incident was reported to WorkSafe later when Programmed advised the contractor, however failure to immediately report these incidents can result in action by the regulator.

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

- Before conducting excavations, ensure Dial Before You Dig plans are present, showing the location of underground infrastructure.
- Ensure SWMS/JSEAs are not generic and are amended before work commences so that they clearly identify the job hazards and controls, with consideration being given to, but not limited to, the location and work environment.
- If an incident occurs, do not proceed with the task until relevant assistance has been provided by a Manager or the HSEQ team to assist in resolving the unsafe conditions or circumstance. **(STOP AND REPORT)**
- Ensure all workers understand Programmed's Safe Work Essentials (including Excavation and Trenching and Every Job Every Time)
- Ensure all workers understand Programmed's Gas Strike procedure.
- Ensure all employees and contractors are aware of requirements to notify incidents to the relevant Health and Safety Regulator

For more information regarding this incident please contact:

HSE Representative: Damian Kondoyiannis
Contact Number: 0438 722 463
8th August 2022

Report all incidents and near misses

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.