

SAFETY ALERT

SA-258 – Damaged Work at Heights Equipment

Background

A PFM water contract work crew were sent out to a job requiring installation of a new ladder in a manhole. As they were hooking up the rescue winch cable to descend into the manhole, the cable got stuck and wouldn't unspool any further. The crew believed that the rope had simply crossed over itself in the spool drum (which can happen) and just needed unspooling. However, the crew did not have time on this occasion to unwind it fully and rewind it. Instead, the crew detached the winch cable and used a second rescue winch that was available.

The stuck winch cable was taken out to another job 8 days later where the cable was found substantially damaged at the 12m mark with only a few strands still intact.

The crew returned the cable to the depot and tagged it 'Out of Service' and arranged for repair after reporting it.



RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

- Always use equipment for what it is designed. Rescue winches should never be used as a primary fall prevention means.
- When inspecting equipment, consider both the manufacturer's instructions and any relevant Australian Standard, adopt the highest standard of controls.
- When inspecting winch wire rope, pull out the rope to its fullest extent prior to first use that shift, and check for damage by running a cloth rag or gloves over the length of rope. Any broken strands of wire can be immediately found.
- When retracting wire rope onto spools, don't let the wire rope retract faster than the spool can spin. This will result in the wire rope 'jumping' the drum onto the spool drum teeth where it can be 'chewed' and damaged. Let it retract slowly.
- When needing to sit suspended in a harness to undertake work, consider a motorised winch system that has a personal remote for the individual in the harness to control raising / lowering actions.
- Team members need to be trained and competent to operate critical safety equipment.
- Work at height and similar equipment should be inspected and tagged by a qualified person.
- Always tag equipment that is faulty 'Out of Service'

For more information regarding this incident please contact:

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|---------------------|----------------|
| HSE Representative: | Richard Aitken |
| Contact Number: | 0429 085 823 |
| Date of Issue: | October 2022 |

Report all incidents and near misses

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