

Working on aerial line poles – working at heights risk

Target audience

All Sydney Trains' workers, including contractors, who manage or undertake work-related activities on aerial line poles.

The Issue

There has been a recent incident where a worker for a Distribution Network Operator, external to Sydney Trains, was fatally injured as a result of falling from a power pole at a construction site.

While Sydney Trains was not aware of any further information relating to the incident at the time of preparing this Safety Alert, any lessons learnt from relevant investigations will be communicated when available.

The incident is a timely reminder of the critical risk of personnel falling from heights when undertaking work-related activities on aerial line poles and the importance of implementing relevant and applicable controls.

What you must do

- Planning or performing work on aerial line poles or other Electrical Network Structures (e.g. Transformers, Switchgear, etc.) needs to consider the risks and applicable controls associated with working at heights. These include ensuring work is done in accordance with the following relevant and applicable controls:
 - Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) and/or Safe Work Instruction (SWI);
 - Sydney Trains' Safety Management System procedures i.e. [PR07 SMS Working at Heights](#) or the equivalent *Working at Heights* procedures for non-Sydney Trains' workers;
 - Electrical Network Safety Rules i.e. [PR-D-78108-Pre-work-Hazard-Assessment-and-Controls-for-Work-on-Poles with Live Exposed Equipment](#); and
 - Electrical Industry Codes of Practice i.e. [ISSC34 Height Safety in the Electrical Industry](#).
- The following elements need to be adhered to when undertaking work activities involving climbing poles:
 - Workers need to have the appropriate competency and accreditation when climbing and working on poles.
 - Ensure incident plans are in place and that there is a Pole Rescue Kit on site, complete and readily available for use by competent people.
 - Poles need to be checked for structural integrity prior to climbing.
 - Where workers are working one (1) metre above ground on poles or structures supporting live exposed electrical equipment, [PR D 78108 FM01 Pre-work Pole Hazard Assessment](#) shall be completed by an Authorised person or where persons in training complete the form, an Authorised Person shall review and countersign.
 - Where used, portable ladders need to be secured to the pole.
 - All applicable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as belts, need to be checked for any signs of wear and tear, and to ensure they are within their maintenance date and suitable for use.
 - Where personnel are still being trained, equipment checks and ensuring they understand the importance of the checks needs to be undertaken with them.
 - For climbing of poles, workers shall secure themselves to the structure before climbing off the ladder and always remain attached to the structure.
 - Three points of contact, with either two hands and one foot or one hand and two feet, needs to be maintained when climbing.
 - Ensure the strap position around the structure must be kept at, or above, the attachment point on the full body harness and the slack in pole straps needs to be eliminated or minimised.
- Business Units will need to undertake the following activities:
 - Ensure SWMS and/or SWIs are regularly reviewed for compliance against the relevant legislative requirements, codes of practice and standards relating to *Working at Heights* and briefed to workers in accordance with business procedures; and
 - Brief electrical workers on this Safety Alert as soon as practicable.

Contact your Line Manager, SEQR Representative or the [Sydney Trains' Electricity Distribution Unit](#) if you have any questions.



Chadi Chalhoub

Executive Director SEQR

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