

Work on utility services allocation of responsibilities between the Construction and Utilities Sectors

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Introduction

1. Both the Construction Sector and the Services, Transport & Safety Unit (STSU) Utilities Section have national interests in health and safety matters relating to the utility industries. This guidance explains the current position over the allocation of work on utility services and informs operational inspectors which sector to contact for assistance.

Allocation of responsibilities

Underground Services

2. For excavation work the utility industries make great use of contractors. For planned work a contractor is likely to carry out the excavation and also install the service pipes/cables. With an emergency fault the utilities' direct employees may carry out the excavation to repair the service but the ground is usually made good by a contractor. All excavation work is a Construction Division matter regardless of the reason for the excavation. As a construction contractor will do the installation of a new service, this will also fall to Construction Division. Both Construction Division and the local Highway Authority have an enforcement role over any temporary traffic management arrangements that are needed for work in the highway.
3. Utility industries make much use of trenchless technology to install new services or replace/repair existing ones. An example would be feeding an expanding tool into an existing water service pipe to burst it and replacing it with a plastic pipe dragged through behind the tool. Such work is done with

the service isolated. Other trenchless methods install a new parallel pipe and the old one is abandoned in-situ.

4. When using trenchless technology the work is a construction activity. Hence the topic of dealing with underground services, including the use of detection devices, will normally fall to the Construction Sector. Construction Sector has the lead for HSE publication HSG47 'Avoiding Danger from Underground Services'.
5. The two notable exceptions are live working, and the keeping of records of underground services. The latter is a utility industry obligation and as such is best dealt with by the Utilities Section, using existing contacts or FOD SG's Electricity Networks Team. In the electricity sector, duty holders are required to comply with the requirements of the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002, as amended ["ESQCR"]. HSE enforces the safety aspects of ESQCR. The Regulations are designed to protect members of the public from the works of the electricity generation, distribution, supply and metering operations.
6. Work carried out on a live service will mainly fall to the Utilities Sector. The only exception being work on gas transmission and distribution mains (up to and including the customer's emergency control valve) which come under the Hazardous Installations Directorate's Gas and Pipelines Unit (HID SI3). Currently most connections to a live service are still under the direct control of the utility companies, but contractors are likely to be given more freedom to work on live services in the future. For example, a contractor may install the power cable to a new housing estate and connect this to the electricity company's live supply. However as the expertise in setting safe standards for such live work rests with the utility industry STSU Utilities Section and FOD Electricity Network Specialists will continue to take the lead on this topic.

Raised services

7. For work involving raised (above ground) services the same criteria should be applied. The erection of structures such as masts and lattice towers is a construction activity. Similarly the maintenance and repair of such structures is a construction activity e.g. tower painting. The installation of new equipment such as stringing a new power cable is a construction activity as the system is dead. However, work on an existing service will fall to STSU Utilities Section, for example, inspecting, cleaning, and replacing insulators on a high voltage line. Such work may be done with the service live or dead. Either way it will involve a risk assessment of the risk posed by the service as well as the physical aspects of the job. The expertise to do such a risk

assessment still resides with the utility industry and as such is best dealt with by the Utility Sector.

8. Climbing of towers, masts and wood poles is either carried out by direct employees of the utilities companies or by contract climbers. STSU Utilities Section will take a national lead with the relevant industries and where appropriate individual companies. However, work at height is a topic in which the Operational Strategy Division (OPSTD) Safety Unit has the cross sector national lead and may be able to provide additional advice on relevant climbing matters.