

Health and Safety Executive		Sector Information Minute	
Commercial and Consumer Services, Transportation and Utilities Sector (CACTUS)		SIM 05/2003/53 (formerly SIM 03/2003/09)	
Cancellation Date	25/07/2007	Open Government Status	Fully Open
Version No & Date	1: 25/07/2003	Author Unit/Section	CACTUS, Utilities Section, Nottingham

Target Audience:

FOD Inspectors (Operational, Sector and Specialist Group)

Construction Inspectors

WORK ON UTILITY SERVICES ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR AND THE COMMERCIAL AND CONSUMER SERVICES, TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES SECTOR

This SIM is aimed at helping inspectors decide which Sector to contact for assistance on issues relating to work on utility services. Its content has been agreed between the new Commercial and Consumer Services, Transportation & Utilities Sector, (CACTUS), and the Construction Sector.

INTRODUCTION

1. Within the Field Operations Directorate of HSE, both the Construction Sector and the Utilities Section of CACTUS have national interests in health and safety matters relating to the utility industries. Over the years, working arrangements have been agreed on who takes forward various national topics. However they have never been formalised, and occasionally, this has resulted in HSE operational inspectors contacting the wrong sector for help. New arrangements have recently been agreed over the allocation of work on underground services, and this Minute explains the latest position.

2. The document should also be of assistance to those outside HSE who wish to make contact on a national issue. The latter should note that whilst HSE operational inspectors are likely to follow the agreed demarcation, it should be appreciated that local variation could occur. For local issues, external clients should first contact their local HSE office for assistance.

ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Underground Services

3. For excavation work the utility industries are making greater 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 made good by a later visit from a contractor. Utility industries are also making much greater use of trench less technology. This can be used to install a new service or replace/repair an existing one. An example would be pipe breaking an existing water service and replacing it with a plastic pipe dragged through behind the breaker. Such work is done with the service isolated.

4. 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. When using trench less technology, as the service will be isolated, this again 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. They have now assumed responsibility for 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.

6. Work carried out on a live service will mainly fall to the Utilities Section. The only exception being work on medium and high-pressure mains gas pipes (up to the emergency control valve), which come under the Hazardous Installations Directorate (HID). 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 companies live supply. However as the expertise in setting safe standards for such live work rests with the utility industry the Utilities Section will continue to take the lead on this topic.

Raised services

7. For work involving raised 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 the Utilities Section. For example inspecting, cleaning, 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 section.

8. Most climbing of towers, masts and wood poles is still carried out by direct employees of the utilities. For this reason the Utilities Section will continue to take a lead with those industries and where appropriate individual companies (Electricity Companies and BT) to develop improved means of accessing such structures, in particular systems involving attached climbing. However we acknowledge this is a topic on which Construction sector has a national lead and therefore we will keep in close contact over any new developments.

FURTHER INFORMATION

9. If more detail is needed please contact either John Bouckley in the Utilities Section of CACTUS (0115 971 2868, VPN 513 2868), or Andrew East of the Construction Sector, (020 7717 6000, VPN 506 2196).

Date first issued: 25 July 2003

