



IRATA SAFETY BULLETIN SB 26

‘Near Miss’: Rope melted by cyclic pipework

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Status	Report following operating members’ reports

1. The incident

A rope access technician carrying out work at height positioned himself and his equipment to a new location while still at height. When the equipment was set up at his new work site, he leaned back to check that the equipment was aligned correctly. By leaning back the path of his ropes changed and his ropes came into contact with unidentified cyclic pipework which had increased in temperature from ambient temperature (about 25 degrees) to greater than 250 degrees.

The supervising Level 3, watching the operator, saw that the outer sheath of the working line had become damaged and the inner core seriously compromised whilst in contact with the cyclic pipework. The level 3 immediately called the technician and advised him to return to his original position and to secure himself to the structure. The level 3 rigged and lowered a replacement set of ropes to the technician and the technician descended safely to the ground, unharmed. All work was ceased immediately.

2. Incident analysis

- 2.1 Rope access team was working in an area with unidentified cyclic pipework.
- 2.2 Rope access team was unfamiliar with cyclic pipe work and its location/function.
- 2.3 Area Authority issuing the permit to work did not identify the potential hazard of cyclic pipework to the performing authority and the rope access team prior to the task commencing.
- 2.4 Onsite, vigilant supervision by the level 3 allowed for the technician to be advised of the incident thus preventing further damage to the technician’s ropes and possible injury to the technician.

3. Control measures

- The sites permit to work system was updated to highlight location of cyclic lines to all operatives.
- Any work sites which are in areas of known cyclic pipework are now discussed in detail with the Area Operators and team prior to issuing the permit to work.
- All works in and around cyclic lines are now considered as working at maximum temperature and as such all risk assessments and controls made to that effect.
- All Ropes will be deviated away and protected from cyclic lines.
(See ICOP reference 2.7.10.1, 2.11.3.1 & Annex P)
- All new operatives will be mentored highlighting dangers of cyclic lines
- Toolbox Talks now revised to include cyclic lines and prompt operators to safeguard ropes from hidden dangers.

4. See also Safety Bulletin 20 ‘Near Miss’ **Rope melted by heat from a lamp** relating to situations where failure of both anchor lines caused by a heat source is possible.