

Learning Alert 25-03 Low Level Fall Resulting in Serious Injury

Incident Summary

A team of scaffolders were tasked with moving scaffold attachments from the anoxic chamber to an Inlet screen. At the time of the incident, the IP was stepping down on to concrete blinding from a higher soft ground to pick up a scaffold attachment. While doing this manual handling task, the IP lost his footing, twisted his leg and awkwardly fell to the ground.

The IP was immediately taken to a nearest hospital by ambulance services.

The IP suffered a serious fracture on his right knee. He is off work waiting for further medical treatment.

The issue has been reported to HSE as required under RIDDOR Regulation.



Pic 1: IP was stepping from soft ground onto the concrete blinding

What went wrong.

As we know, ground conditions are constantly changing in a construction work environment, especially where heavy earth works are taking place. The ground between the mixing chamber and the inlet screen was uneven and had turned soft and muddy due to recent heavy rain. A slight gradient or change of level when stepping down on to the concrete blinding (as seen in Pic 1) also contributed to the incident.

Suitable access and egress was not maintained into the area.

Learnings

Slips and trips are the most common cause of injury at work. On average, they cause 40% of all reported major injuries and cost employers over 500m per year.

There are many factors that contribute to slips, trips and falls on a worksite.

- Unsuitable / uneven ground surfaces
- Obstructions in walkways
- Wet/contaminated floor
- Unsuitable footwear
- Poor lighting
- Human error

To reduce slips, trips and falls in a workplace we must focus on;

Design and Management

Site management must ensure that walkways are located correctly, available for use, wide enough and level. Stairs should be suitable, with usable handrails available and risers consistent. Markings to be used to indicate changes in level.

Workers must play their part in keeping the workplace safe and tidy. Cleaning up spillages if trained and safe to do so, removing items people could trip over and by reporting it.

Environment:

This could include: lighting (inadequate lighting could stop people seeing hazards); noise (could distract people from hazards); weather (rainwater, ice, snow, frost etc could make working condition hazardous).

Human factors:

How people act and behave in their work environment – for instance, inappropriate use of mobile phones, rushing around, not following SSOW, Complacency - repetitive task etc.

House Keeping:

There should be no trailing wires or other obstructions, an effective cleaning regime and adequate storage facilities and rubbish bins to avoid trips.

