

Learning Alert 25-51 High Potential Near Miss Removal of a secondary isolation point

Incident Description

A subcontractor was tasked with blanking a GAC inlet feed pipe. The work was carried out under a Thames G Permit, with double isolation in place and overseen by the MWH Mechanical AP. The site was fully shut down, ensuring no additional flow into the pipework, effectively providing a third layer of isolation.

During the task, it was discovered that the pipework hadn't been drained prior to works as anticipated. With a four-hour isolation window, the subcontractor attempted to assist with the draining process but as progress was slower than expected, they removed one of the isolations midway through to expedite the process, draining the pipe via a blanking plate.

Although the risk of harm to personnel was low due to the remaining isolation and the site being off supply, it was perceived at the time that it could affect water quality.



Isolation points from the valves shown in the photo

The investigation identified several learnings:

Finding	Learning
There was a failure to stop the task when it was identified that the pipework hadn't been drained prior to the works taking place	Always be clear on roles and responsibilities for each specific task through clear upfront planning and communication and record it in the RAMS/SSoW (safe system of Works) – if in doubt Ask. You are empowered to stop works that you feel is unsafe.
Subcontractor deviated from the Task Specific RAMS and approved method of working by removing isolation	Clear standards and hold points set by management with supervision from Client, MWHT and Subcontractor throughout isolation task and MUST be followed
Task was not reviewed during the morning briefing nor during issue of G Permit to outline expectations. This also lacked the detail required around task specific requirements and responsibilities.	Daily morning brief 'MUST' include a task specific briefing from AP/ CP to subcontractor and TW representative to ensure expectations and SSoW's are set and agreed by all parties.
Outage time was agreed to be reduced from 6 hours to 4 hours with the pipework not being confirmed drained prior to this timescale being agreed.	Updating SSoW with the hold points that must be follow ensuring that realistic expectations are set and are achievable.

Additional Actions

- “Stop work” method must be applied if you observe a violation outside of task specific RAMS or Permit.
- Locking system must always be in place during isolation schedule and agreed with the Client.
- Ensure minimum of 2 way locking system are in place (MWHT and subcontractor). Some contracts also require 3 way locking to include the client.
- All RAMs must be passed through Intuity by the subcontractor and reviewed by MWHT and correct AP/CP assigned to task.

