

# Civil engineering firm fined £4m following M6 works

Civil engineering firm Kier has been fined more than £4m after its staff twice struck overhead powerlines while working on the M6 motorway causing cables to land in the path of passing vehicles.

In one incident, an overhead cable the Kier workers brought down hit a lorry. The second time, a cable landed on the motorway.

An investigation by workplace regulator the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found after one incident Kier workers failed to immediately tell the network provider Scottish Power what they had done.

Both incidents happened on overnight road works part of the smart motorway scheme between junctions 16 and 18 near Sandbach in Cheshire.

During the first incident, a team of three from Kier were working a nightshift on 28 March 2018. The workers were clearing tarmac from the hard shoulder and loading a truck with a digger. As they moved the truck along with an attached crane raised it struck and severed a 11kV overhead powerline that landed in the motorway and in a nearby field. The company failed to immediately tell Scottish Power, which meant the cable was reenergised a number of times while it was lying on the motorway and vehicles were passing.

During the second incident, another team from Kier were taking down a motorway barrier on 21 January 2019. Their tractor struck an overhead cable which led to an unmarked 11kV powerline being hit and snapped by an oncoming lorry.

HSE found that inadequate planning from Kier meant the vehicle used in the first incident was unsuitable despite other more suitable vehicles being available. There was also no task-specific risk assessment available for the workers.

In the second incident, the workers were unaware of the overhead hazards.

In relation to the first incident, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Limited, of Clippers Quay, Salford pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. In relation to the second incident, they pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.

In total, the company were fined £4.215m and ordered to pay costs of £80,759.60 at Manchester Crown Court on 12 January 2023.

HSE inspector Susan Ritchie said: "This is a significant fine reflecting the seriousness of the failures here. The company's failure to plan the work properly and provide an adequate risk assessment put its workers and those

using the motorway in significant danger.”

**Notes to Editors:**

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](http://legislation.gov.uk/)
3. More information regarding working with overhead power lines can be found at [Avoiding danger from overhead power lines GS6 \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://hse.gov.uk/avoiding-danger-from-overhead-power-lines-gs6)
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
5. Footage of the first incident can be found here – [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13Sq9xDT0pZEp8s5\\_i5tWcqV5GyRmwT9n](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13Sq9xDT0pZEp8s5_i5tWcqV5GyRmwT9n)