

Two contractors sentenced after cable strike at substation

A principal contractor and subcontractor have been fined after an employee's retina was damaged by an explosion caused by a cable strike during construction works at a substation.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how VolkerInfra Ltd, a high voltage cabling contractor, had been subcontracted by principal contractor Siemens Energy Ltd to carry out cabling works as part of a wider construction project at Whitegate Substation in Chadderton, Manchester.

On the 17th September 2019, an employee of VolkerInfra Ltd, who was excavating phases for laying a 275kV cable, struck an existing live cable close by with the excavator. The contact resulted in multiple explosions which caused blistering to the driver's retina.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the permit to dig had not been properly completed by Siemens Energy. It was also found neither they, nor the subcontractors had checked the cable markings prior to work commencing. The existing live cable had not been adequately identified and so the markings for the cable location were incorrect by around 50cm. It was also found there had been inadequate monitoring and supervision of work.

Siemens Energy Ltd of Faraday House, Sir William Siemens Square, Camberley, Surrey pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 13(1) of the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015 and Section 3 (1) Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 was fined £900,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,327.52.

Volkerinfra Ltd of Hertford House, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire pleaded guilty to breaches of Section 3 (1) Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £180,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,430.72.

HSE Inspector Rebecca Vaudrey said after the hearing: "Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working."

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](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

[Avoiding danger from underground services – HSG47 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>