

Safety Alert

Failure of High Access Equipment

24 August 2021

Background information

- A team of three operatives were working at a height of approximately 7-8 metres underneath a viaduct.
- The operatives were competent trained rope access personnel, working from a steel cable. Each operative was attached via a harness whilst installing brackets for ducting beneath the viaduct.
- One end of the cable was anchored using a carabiner that was calculated and adjusted to hold the correct weight.
- The carabiner failed whilst the operatives were working causing them to fall to the ground.
- One operative landed in the canal, one suffered a broken ankle and one had a broken wrist and femur.
- All involved (including all site personal and family members) have been offered support from the contractor and Highways England.



Investigation

- A rope specialist has been brought in to carry out a full investigation and to help us understand why the carabiner failed and help improve future operations that are conducted within the same way.
- Highways England are working closely with the contractor and HSE to establish all the facts and offer support where necessary.
- The investigation is ongoing and lessons learnt will be shared once all information is gathered.

Remember

- Follow an approved Code of Practice for rope working (in this case IARTA).
- When working on high level access equipment, ensure that a specialist is on hand to;
- **Plan** the works thoroughly and note within the RAMS. *Ask your ropes specialist to review the RAMS paying particular attention to the provision of a separate safety line for each operative.*
- **Manage** the works continually to follow the RAMS, any changes to be signed off by a supervisor.
- **Monitor** – ensure correct supervision of the job throughout the process.
- **Assurance and audit systems** - reviewed to obtain positive affirmation that that current risk assessments, procedures and processes are being followed correctly

Don't Walk By

- If something doesn't look right, or feel right, or you believe there may be a different /better way to do something, stop the job and speak up.