

Ladders, Working At Heights, Confined Spaces.

Summary

NI Water again wishes to turn the spotlight on Safety in Confined Spaces, Working at Heights and the use of ladders following an incident where a member of staff has had a fall from a ladder resulting in serious injury. In this case the staff member slipped from the top of a 2.75m fixed vertical ladder into a concrete chamber injuring his back and striking his head on the concrete wall. The ladder was in good condition. The injured party was unable to summon assistance as there was no phone signal within the chamber and had to climb out of the chamber to raise the alarm. While the injury was serious the potential consequences could have been much worst.

Below is a photograph of the chamber access ladder which appears from the top to present minimal risk however 1 simple slip of the foot changed all that.



Recommendations

1. Ensure that all training is up to date. Under no circumstances should any confined space work or Work at heights take place without the appropriate training.
2. Ensure you are familiar with the appropriate risk assessment and the control measures detailed within it including the correct manning levels and equipment.
3. Always assess the job before starting to ensure that you have the correct equipment and manning levels to carry out the work safely.
4. If working alone ensure you are logged onto the Lone Worker System before starting. Leave a clear message indicating where exactly you are and how long it will take to complete the work. Note it is often necessary log on to the lone worker even on manned sites if the others working on site do not know where you are or if they could leave the site before your task is complete.
5. Check the condition of all ladders and step irons before use. Portable ladders should be either tied at the top or footed at the bottom by a co-worker.
6. Damaged ladders should be immediately removed from service and labelled for destruction.
7. For confined space work always wear your safety harness.
8. Test the atmosphere by lowering the gas monitor into the chamber.
9. Always carry the gas monitor and saver set with you into the confined space.
10. Ensure your harness is attached to either a winch and fall arrester before using the ladder.
11. Ensure all safety devices are used including ladder extensions or pull up hand holds.
12. For further details on Working at Heights & in Confined Spaces refer to Safe Systems of work SSOW01 & SSOW18.

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Prepared by:	Derek Kelly (Safety, Health & Environment Team)	
Approved by:	Dymphna Gallagher (Head of Safety & Asset Management)	