SAFETY ALERT

Butt fusion operation on a similar site.

Face injury from recoiling plastic pipe

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What Happened:

An operative sustained a broken nose, fractured cheek bone and multiple cuts and bruises after the end of a 180mm PE pipe coil struck the IP on the face.

The pipe was being held in place by an excavator but 'slipped' from underneath the bucket, re-coiled, and hit the IP. A full accident investigation has been carried out lessons learnt include:

- Any change of construction method should be adequately planned and managed
- Opportunities to challenge the working area constraints e.g. the permitted length of the traffic management, were not taken
- The pipe supplier was not engaged to determine whether or not a pre-chlorinated straight length of pipe could have been welded onto the end of the pipe coil

Reminder:

All coils of PE and associated pipework irrespective of their diameter are subject to significant stress build up when they cool during the manufacturing process. This energy can be released in the form of sudden movements with potential to cause serious injury, the larger the pipe diameter the greater the hazard.

- All pipe laying operations must be subject to suitable and sufficient risk assessment accompanied by a relevant SSoW.
- Methods of restraining pipe need to be appropriate and consider the potential for slippage or other sudden movements.
- Although smaller diameter pipe poses less risk there is still the potential to injure soft tissue such as eyes so appropriate eye protection or face shielding must be worn.
- When the installation of PE and associated pipework is required consider the use of straight lengths 'sticks' if the risks from coiled pipe cannot be adequately controlled.
- Methods of laying coiled pipe will contribute to the level of risk, open cut trench installations are more liable to this risk than directional drilling.

REMEMBER – Nothing is so important you cannot take the time to do it safely

Safety Alerts should not be thought of as an accident investigation report. However, they are issued to raise awareness of accidents that occur and to highlight the safe work practices required to avoid them being repeated.