

# ASP Safety Alert Network Compliance and Authorisations

Alert Number: SA05\_21

01 December 2021

Subject: Information on the use of power cutting tools

## Key Messages

**Power cutting tools cannot be used when working within trenches, joint bays, and pits etc. where underground assets exist.**

Dear ASPs,

Ausgrid have previously issued a safety alerts on 16 November 2009 and 22 December 2014 relating to incidents involving an power tools causing personal injury and asset damage within trenches.

With the evolution of cordless power tools and their adaption into modern work practices, Ausgrid have witnessed increased access and use of these tools within excavations and trenches. Use of power cutting tools within these locations creates a risk of electrical flashover, unintended damage to assets and personal risk from cut and crush injuries.

To reiterate, power cutting tools cannot be used when working within trenches, joint bays, etc. where underground assets exist.

When working on or near the network ASPs should ensure their employees comply with rule 9.9.1 of Ausgrid's Electrical Safety Rules and NS156 – "Working Near or Around Underground Cables" and have:

- access to current utility asset plans, for example Dial Before You Dig plans
- identified and assessed all hazards including other utility services
- removed any soil or backfill to a minimum radius of 200mm around any cable, conduit or cover strip before cutting a cable
- appropriate controls in place to mitigate any hazards
- all individuals associated with the work aware of the hazards
- all assets positively identified including live Ausgrid cables when working in trenches and joint bays

Ausgrid suggests the following alternative tools for working in trenches and joint bays where underground assets exist:

- hand saws for cutting existing conduits only after the conduit has been inspected to ensure no cables are not installed in them
- hand saws and mechanical shears for cutting existing cable after positive identification and either access permit, clearance to work permits are issued or under an equipping permit
- piano wire for cutting conduits only after the conduit has been inspected to ensure no cables are not installed in them
- a depth guided veneer saw for cutting inspection windows in conduits

If an incident occurs on Ausgrid's network, please ensure your employees are aware of their responsibilities to make the site safe and to contact the following groups immediately:

- the Ausgrid Control Room (Newcastle 4951 0540 and Sydney 9284 1140) If unsure – use 13 13 88
- emergency services if required
- their immediate supervisors
- the Compliance Officer assigned to the project or their nominated Field Manager.

Any incidents relating to the use of power cutting tools will have a safety breach issued with normal investigation and outcome procedures will be followed.

**Ausgrid**

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