

Hazards created by copper theft

Risk of electric shock

Safety alert

Background

There have recently been increased reports of copper theft occurring from customer's installations and distribution company's networks. In many cases, access to the assets has been gained via underground pits.

These thefts have created increased electrical risks for electrical workers and registered electrical contractors.



Recent events

An electrical worker was injured when an electrical flashover occurred in an underground pit while low voltage testing was being undertaken, following copper theft.

ESV was advised of live exposed customer's mains cable in an underground pit, following copper theft.

Electrical hazard

Exposed live cable ends create the potential for a person to sustain burns, receive an electric shock or result in death.

These particular thefts are becoming more widespread. It is therefore important that workers are vigilant, as the risks may not be apparent until the pit lid cover is removed.

Risk controls

Before commencing any work on live electricity, you must identify, review and implement safe systems of work.

When access to underground pits is required, safety measures to guard against contact with electrical energies must be identified and implemented. These may include, but are not limited to:

- insulated glove and outer
- insulated covers and mats
- installing non-conductive physical barriers.

All personnel accessing pits must be suitably trained, competent and authorised to do so, and in accordance with any relevant company procedures.

Consider all cables in pits as being alive.

Use of all appropriate personal protective equipment determined as part of a risk assessment. This may include, but is not limited to:

- approved safety glasses
- safety boots
- approved wrist to ankle clothing
- head protection
- approved insulating tools and testing equipment.

