

Service Strike – Earthenware Pipe

During a burst water main repair, a worker has cut through an unidentified earthenware pipe striking a live 400V cable encased inside

What happened?

- A water crew discovered 2 unknown earthenware pipes resting on top of a burst water main, assumed to be drainage pipes. This raised concerns regarding a contamination risk to the drinking water network
- A drainage crew attended and decided to remove and replace sections of the unidentified earthenware pipes
- A compact circular saw was used to cut the pipes and struck a live power cable encased inside one
- The utility owner had marked out the power cables shown on their plans but did not scan the full site – the cable within the earthenware pipe was not identified on the plans and not marked out

What did we learn from this?

1. Stop and reassess when discovering anything unknown on site
2. Plans are only an indication of service locations. Fully scan the excavation area before breaking ground
3. If unsure about any pipe, scan it or break it open instead of cutting it

Where may we find earthenware encased service lines?

- Abandoned pipes are used as quick and easy ways to install utility service lines. Treat any abandoned or unknown pipes as if they have service lines running inside them.

