

Safety Bulletin

Significant Accident / Specified Injury



Issued to: All route functions, line managers and staff including contractors, Wessex Route

Reference: Staff accident resulting in broken bones

Date of Issue: 28/01/2021

Location: Down Exeter (BAE1) lines between Andover and Whitchurch, Wessex Route

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The location where the IP slipped, Down Exeter Line (BAE1) at 63m50ch

Overview

On Wednesday 30th December 2020, a member of contracting team working on behalf of Coombes Forestry in the Whitchurch area, slipped whilst walking along an ice-covered troughing route on the Down Exeter Line (BAE1) at 63m50ch. The individual was returning to join his team, after visually inspecting the previously cleared area between the boundary fence and the embankment. The low overnight temperatures resulted in a widespread frost and increased risk of slips, trips and falls due to icy underfoot conditions.

The individual's right boot slipped forward on the ice and almost immediately regained traction and grip. During this motion, whilst trying to stop himself from falling, the IP's body twisted but his right ankle stayed in the same position. The transfer of his body weight caused a fracture to his Tibia and Fibula above the boot line and below the knee. He was unable to put any pressure on his leg but managed to call for help and was assisted by his colleagues to the nearest access point and then taken to Winchester A&E. The following day the IP underwent a surgery and it is estimated that the full recovery will take 6 to 8 weeks.

The IP was wearing a pair of class 2 chainsaw boots which offer the correct protection against any potential chainsaw related injuries and the ankle protection. But the energy resulting from the transfer of his body mass and the angle of his body twisting were contributing factors to his bones breaking at the weakest point above the boot line and had a direct impact on the severity of his injury.

Discussion Points:

- ***The PIC has the overall responsibility for safety of all team members on site and should identify and communicate site-specific risks including slip, trip and fall related hazards, sometimes there is a need to continually remind everyone when situations change.***
- ***Management of less experienced members of staff; this was the individual's first winter working on the railway infrastructure and first experience of how treacherous ice covered troughing can be.***
- ***Troughing routes; when are they the sensible option?***