Overhead Electrical Hazards for Municipalities Fatality File

On Friday 22 March 2019, WorkSafe ACT was called to a multi-level residential construction site in Curtin. A worker on site had received an electric shock when the metal top hat roofing purlin he was installing came into contact with nearby overhead electric power lines.

Thankfully upon the top hat contacting the power lines, the Residual Current Device (RCD) fused to overload and trip, with the worker receiving a minor electric shock. The worker was transported to a medical facility where the relevant medical assessment cleared him of any serious concerns. Had the top hat contacted the power lines in another sequence the result may well have been catastrophic.

An investigation into the incident has identified that a number of factors that contributed to the incident. These included:

- due to the additional dwellings being constructed, the building envelope has come within approximately 3.5metres of the existing overhead power lines.
- suitable controls had not been implemented to ensure visual indicators were in place denoting the presence of overhead power lines.
- the length of the metal top hat was in excess of 3.5m and when being positioned for installation had exceeded the safe approach distance of 3m.
- before works had commenced a specific visual risk assessment had not clearly identified hazards in the immediate work area
- the worker advised a major factor leading to the incident has been complacency on his behalf given he has been working predominately on residential sites in green field areas where underground utility services where installed.