



OVERHEAD CABLE MARKER POSTS
IHT Awards 2008
‘Health & Safety at Work Award’

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IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

In 2006/07, 10 construction workers were killed in Great Britain through contact with electricity, representing 13% of all construction fatalities. The risk of working in the vicinity of overhead power lines is well documented and measures can be taken to eliminate, control and inform on this risk for construction sites. However operating and managing an extensive highway network on a daily basis is a different proposition.



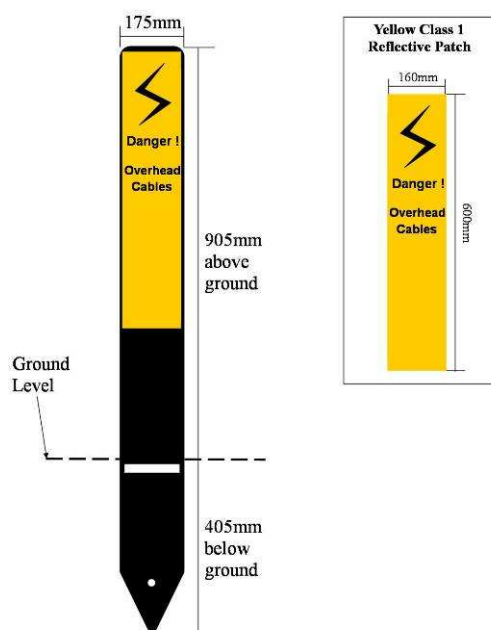
A-one Integrated Highway Services are the Managing Agent Contractor for the Highways Agency in Area 14, operating and maintaining 300km of trunk roads and motorways in the North East of England. The day-to-day operation and management of the network includes routine maintenance works, emergency repairs and major incident management.

A-one recognised that in carrying out these activities, there was a real risk posed at the numerous locations where overhead power lines cross the network. This represented a clear hazard to roadworkers carrying out routine maintenance and emergency repairs, and emergency services attending incidents on the network.

IDENTIFYING THE SOLUTION

A-one worked in partnership with Glasdon UK Limited, local emergency services and the Highways Agency's Area 14 Team to brainstorm innovative solutions to this problem. After much constructive discussion, the Glasdon Flexmaster® Overhead Cable Marker Post was conceived and a prototype developed.

The marker post is manufactured from highly durable Ultraflex™ polymer material, which can withstand vehicle impact. It was designed with a highly visible yellow reflective material. The knock-down, spring-back properties ensure that the marker posts are passively safe under BS EN 12767, thereby not in themselves introducing an additional hazard onto the network.



Jason Walker, Glasdon's Area Sales Manager commented,

“The core supply chain partnering principles of Glasdon and A-one enabled a pool of knowledge and experience to be used in developing the Overhead Cable Marker Post - a particular solution for a particular problem .”



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THE BENEFITS

The marker posts provide a number of real benefits to a number of users:-

Improved Roadworker Safety – By clearly identifying the locations where overhead power lines cross the highway, roadworkers carrying out routine maintenance or emergency repairs can easily see whether overhead power lines cross the area where work is being carried out, especially during hours of darkness.

Improved Safety for the Emergency Services – When attending an incident on the network, the emergency services are required to act quickly to minimise impact and preserve life. The faster that potential hazards can be identified the more opportunity the emergency services have to be effective. The marker posts provide the emergency services with key, accurate information regarding potential hazards in the area of any incident.

Inspector Chris Charlton of North Yorkshire Police commented,

“The marker posts are an excellent idea that really draws attention to the often forgotten risks posed by overhead power cables. A failure to fully assess the risks involved can lead to injuries not only to recovery operators and our own staff but also to the public at large. The presence of marker posts will improve the overall safety of roadside operations”



Dave McCabe, North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service's Community Risk Manager commented,

“The marker posts enable us to identify overhead power lines as part of our risk assessment when attending an incident. This tool helps to reduce the risk to fire-fighters, and others, attending an incident on any part of the network.”



Improved Safety for Recovery Services – The marker posts provide recovery operators with vital information on nearby hazards when recovering immobile vehicles. Recovery Services often work in restricted spaces next to high speed traffic. It is important that recovery personnel can quickly identify surrounding risks to enable vehicles to be removed as quickly and safely as possible.

Bill Calvert, Managing Director of CF Motoring Services commented,

“Glasdon Flexmaster marker posts used in Area 14 by A-one are an innovative idea that will save lives. They give immediate warning to our operatives on arrival & during initial risk assessment, along with a constant reminder of danger whilst working on the network day & night.”





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Safer Highway Network for Users – With overhead power lines clearly identified, valuable time is not lost checking through databases for overhead cable locations. This in turn reduces incident clear up times and allows emergency repairs to be carried out quicker, reducing incident led congestion and ensuring the network is safer for all road users.

Easy Installation and Maintenance – The driven marker posts are easy to install and have now been safely and securely fitted into the nearside verge 12m before and 12m after each overhead power line. After securing funding from the Highways Agency, they were installed by the Incident Support Units who patrol the network on a 24-hour basis, thereby ensuring minimal cost. 894 marker posts have now been installed throughout the Area 14 network at locations where overhead power lines cross the carriageway.

The marker posts have no maintenance requirements. The reflective markings are still effective even when partially covered by mud and are not easily obscured by long grass.



WIDER IMPLEMENTATION

In 2007, A-one were awarded the MAC Contract for Highways Agency Area 10. Work is now already underway to install the marker posts in Area 10, covering a further 500km of the trunk road and motorway network.

Northumberland County Council has been impressed by the marker posts and have contacted A-one for details. They are now considering adopting the marker posts on their local authority network.

SUMMARY

A-one are committed to 'zero tolerance' on health and safety, and take responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation seriously. In addition, A-one encourage imaginative thinking with supply chain partners to improve roadworker safety. The development and implementation of the marker posts contribute to both these objectives.

Phill Beaumont, A-one's Assistant Network Manager commented,

"The provision of the Overhead Cable Marker Posts has significantly reduced the safety risk to roadworkers carrying out daily maintenance and emergency services attending incidents, by giving a clear warning of the actual location of overhead cables on the Area 14 network."