

Near miss incident sends sharp reminder

A near miss incident involving earth movers and electrical wires is a reminder to businesses to confirm that lines are not electrically live before beginning work, and to never make the assumption that they are not live.

The message comes after Dimac Contractors Limited was recently sentenced following an appearance in the Hutt Valley District Court.

Dimac faced one charge after a near miss incident in April last year. Workers were clearing top soil from a development site in Upper Hutt when a digger struck a 240kv power line. The impact caused a power pole to snap and fall to the ground. The power line became entangled on the digger and was later cut off by a different worker.

Dimac had been told by the property developer that they thought the lines were dead, but they were not sure, so to treat them as live.

The power lines, assumed by the contractor to be off, were in fact live and risked the lives of two workers involved in the incident.

Chief Inspector Investigations Keith Stewart said both workers were lucky to escape the incident unscathed.

“The hazards associated with electricity are well known and with four power poles in clear view on the site, the hazard should have been noted and testing completed to assess the state of the power lines.

“The fact that neither worker was hurt is not relevant in this instance. The risk posed was great and the contractor was negligent in ensuring the health and safety of their workers. Those working with and near to power lines should assume they are alive, until they have been informed otherwise”.

Notes:

- The fine imposed by the judge was \$90,000
- Dimac Contractors Limited was sentenced for one charge under sections 36(1) (a),48(1) and (2)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

1. Failed to ensure, so far as was reasonably practicable, the health and safety of

workers who worked for the PCBU, while the workers were at work in the business or undertaking, namely carrying out earthworks, and that failure exposed the workers to a risk of death or serious injury, arising from exposure to live electricity.

- The maximum penalty was a fine not exceeding \$1,500,000.