

Alert No 25/2015

**Safety Alert**

**Fatal Injury Involving Vacuum Excavator**



Yesterday morning one of our colleagues, working for a subcontractor on the M3 project in Surrey, was killed whilst operating a vacuum excavator (*an example vacuum excavator is pictured above*). Our thoughts and sympathies are with his family and colleagues.

Investigations are underway, and we are working with the authorities to understand what happened.

Coming so soon after a death in Hong Kong and after our UK-wide stand-down for safety on Friday, this tragic accident

This safety alert has been prepared by the RSTA. Completed forms for adding to the RSTA website should be submitted to Clive Mitchell clive@rsta-uk.org For further information regarding this safety alert please email Clive or phone 07557529410



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must remind us all again very strongly that we cannot take safety for granted

We will share learning from this tragic incident as soon as we are able to, but in the interim **all work involving remotely controlled vacuum excavators must be stopped and not restarted until the following points can be satisfactorily implemented in full**:

* A full exclusion zone must be established around the operation which must include the operating radius of the boom as a minimum
* If anyone has to enter the excavation for any reason, the boom must be moved to a safe position and the machine must be completely isolated
* If the remote control is operated through an umbilical cord, this must extend to allow the operator to work from a place of safety
* At no time must anyone work or walk underneath the boom or vacuum nozzle, whether it is being operated or not
* The vacuum excavator must be treated like any other excavator in that works must stop and the machine completely isolated if anyone approaches the machine or talks to the operator



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* There must be a secondary person in the vicinity of the operation, who is trained to operate the machine in case of an emergency.