High potential dropped object incident

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A Member reported an incident in which tools were dropped from height.

What happened?

The incident occurred during pick up of engineers from a wind turbine tower. A wind farm workboat was 'pushed up' against a turbine to collect two technicians, who were descending the tower. As they did so, a ratchet and two sockets fell from the work pouch of one of the technicians, and landed on the on the bow/deck of the vessel. The ratchet – weighing 0.5kg – and sockets fell approximately 15m and landed centimetres from the crewman on board the vessel. There were no injuries and the technician then continued his descent down the ladder to board the vessel. All persons were wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Our Member noted the following:

- The technician was carrying tools unsecured in his pocket and subsequently the tools fell out of his pocket as he began to make his descent.
- The technician should not have been carrying tools on his person whilst descending the ladder but instead should have put all tools in the bags provided to be winched up or down by the crane.
- There had been no checks made by the technicians to establish whether or not tools were being carried about their person before descending the ladder on the wind turbine tower.

Use of the DROPS calculator (see dropsonline.org) suggested that had these falling objects hit the crewman, it would have resulted in a major injury and hospitalisation.

Recommendations

Our Member recommended that 'buddy checks' are made to check for loose objects and correct use of PPE before technicians disembark onto vessels.

Members may wish to encourage circulation of the following safety promotional material:

- Avoiding dropped objects (poster, pocket card)

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