

Live feeder cable cut in disconnection error

Christchurch – residential home.

What happened?

A vacant disconnection was requested for a property and completed by technician. The disconnection was made at the pillar fuse due to the technician being unable to gain access onto the property.

A demolition contractor returned to the property to begin work, they tested various plugs in the property with a meter and found no reading which led them to believe the electricity was disconnected. The occupant called Contact Energy and received confirmation of the disconnection. On this basis the feeder cable to the property was cut resulting in a short circuit and arc flash. The contractor had used an insulated battery saw to cut through the cable (reducing the risk of electric shock) after finding that his bolt cutters were too small.

What did we learn?

The disconnection wasn't completed correctly. There were three phases going from the network to the pillar box which then supplied two properties. The supply cables were colour coded and the feeder cables marked. The technician only disconnected one of the phases leaving the property partially connected.

There was no testing undertaken to verify the disconnection.

There was no test undertaken by the demolition contractor to confirm the cable was dead.

The Customer Service Representative (at Contact Energy) had referred to the request for disconnection which showed the job as complete without recommending the contractor seek further positive assurance.

