



Environment
Agency

Environmental Learning from Experience Notice (ELENs)

ELEN notice reference: ELEN 50

These notices highlight environmental issues that have arisen within the Environment Agency and set out preventative actions to be taken.

Change of risk after work is planned

What happened?

After heavy rain, the planned access route to a job was waterlogged and unusable. The contractor chose an alternative route in the excavator which was outside the agreed working boundary.

The excavator got stuck in a ditch causing damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) it had entered as part of the unplanned detour. There was also damage in the original agreed working area, because the contractor continued to work in the unsuitable wet ground conditions.

In an incident elsewhere, following heavy rain, desilting took place in a watercourse which had high water levels, using an excavator. The contractor couldn't see the bank as it was submerged under water but still continued with the job. As a result, water vole habitat that was submerged along the bank was damaged by the machinery.

What issues arose?

In both cases, contractors took unplanned action that harmed the environment. An alternative way of working was chosen without reassessing the risks, understanding the boundaries or amending the method statement. Lack of Dynamic Risk Assessment resulted in the environmental damage.

Who needs to do what?

- **Anyone undertaking work out in the field or managing a contractor**
 - Check the location and the boundaries for designated sites, such as SSSI's, before you start work. Ensure that contractors have been given clear details of the boundaries and do not deviate from planned agreed routes identified in the planning paperwork.
 - Ensure conditions are suitable for carrying out the planned work and if they are not, use dynamic risk assessment principles and stop work. Use the [Change of Risk form](#) to assess unexpected working conditions after following [Dynamic Risk Assessment](#)

Initiated by: Authorised by: Simon Dawes, Head of IEM

Date of Issue: Feb 2016

Contact for more information: Cath Hill, IEM