

ALERT TOPIC	Dropped Object from Rope Access Works – High Potential Near Miss	ALERT REFERENCE:	Chris Donahue
TARGET AUDIENCE:	Regional Managers, Site Managers, Site Engineers and Supervisors, Operatives,	AUTHORISED BY:	Steve Jones
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INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday 21 April 2026, rope access painting works were being undertaken at BT Tower, Swansea. During the initial set-up of the task, an operative was positioned on the rope system at approximately 62 metres above ground level and was preparing equipment for the painting activity. As part of this process, a small spring-loaded device was being transferred and attached to a backup line to support a paint kettle.

To complete this task, the device had to be handled in an unsecured state and was not subject to any form of secondary retention. While the operative was carrying out this activity at height, the spring-loaded mechanism activated unexpectedly and the device was released from his control.

The item fell from a 62m height, initially striking a lower pedestrian walkway. Due to the energy of the impact, it rebounded beyond the building edge, cleared the perimeter Heras fencing, and entered a live car park and pedestrian interface below, where it struck a vehicle.

No injury occurred. However, this was purely down to circumstance. The drop height, trajectory, and final impact location clearly demonstrate that the potential outcome was serious injury or fatality.

The investigation confirmed that this was a high-potential near miss and was fully preventable.

It also confirmed that this was not simply an equipment issue. The device design contributed, but the underlying causes were failures in planning and control. The task required a detachable item to be handled at height without secondary retention, no exclusion zone had been established below the works, the permit did not fully reflect the live working location, and the briefing process had not been effectively implemented across the full team.

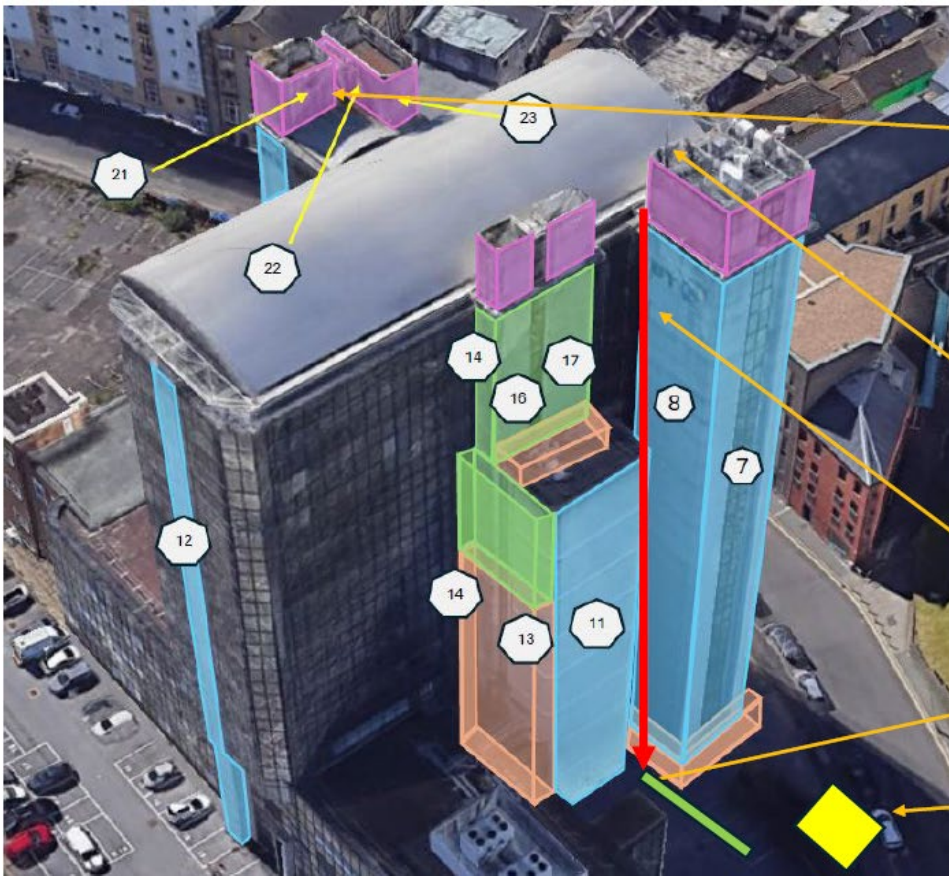
This incident highlights the importance of getting the fundamentals right. Any item that can fall must be secured or the method changed. Exclusion zones must be based on actual working height and potential trajectory, not assumptions. Permits must reflect the work being carried out, and all operatives must be properly briefed and supervised before work starts.

REASON FOR ISSUING THIS ALERT

To share immediate learning and reinforce the control of dropped objects during rope access and all work at height activities.

If it can fall, it must be secured. If it cannot be secured, the work must stop and the method changed. Uncontrolled items at height are not permitted.

This alert also reinforces the duty under the Work at Height Regulations 2005 to prevent people being struck by falling materials or objects.



Permit for 21/04/26 stated they were working at elevations 21,22,23 – which is on the other side of the building.

Elevations 19 & 20 are the internal facing elevations of this tower.

Dropped object trajectory path

Pedestrian access
 Welfare units

- **If it can fall, it must be secured.**
All tools, devices and equipment used at height must have suitable secondary retention. No exceptions.
- **No loose items during rope access works.**
Tasks that require equipment to be fully detached at height must be reviewed and redesigned or controlled with secondary retention.
- **Exclusion zones must be based on reality, not assumption.**
At 62 metres, objects will bounce, travel and clear barriers. Roofs and Heras fencing are not protection.
- **No work over live areas without control.**
Pedestrian routes and vehicle areas must be segregated or closed off before work starts.
- **Permits must reflect the actual work.**
Working levels, locations and activities must be accurate. Any change requires a full review, reissue and re-brief.
- **Brief the full team, every time.**
All operatives must attend and sign the daily briefing. If you're not briefed, you don't start.
- **Supervisors must verify, not assume.**
Check the permit, check the work area, check the controls, check the team. If it doesn't match, stop the job.
- **Stop work if it doesn't feel right.**
If access, controls or setup aren't correct, do not proceed. Raise it and reassess.
- **Dropped objects from height will seriously injure or kill.**
This was avoidable. The next one might not be.
- **CRL operates a no-blame culture.**
Speaking up prevents incidents. Silence allows them to happen.