Lifting Manhole Covers

The issues
Manhole covers are usually manually lifted using levers to pry the cover out of the frame and then by using manhole keys and manual handling techniques. The risks associated with this activity include the risk of trapping hands or feet between the cover and the frame or the ground. There is also the possibility of back injuries when manually handling manhole covers.

Manhole covers come in all shapes, sizes and weights. The thickness and weight of a cover is assessed during the initial manual handling operation. The environment surrounding the manhole cover will also influence the ability to lift it. If the manhole cover is in a raised position, bordered by a wall or fence, surrounded by an uneven, broken or slippery surface or temporarily obstructed by a vehicle; it becomes difficult to adopt any form of safe lifting posture.

Where manhole covers are lifted manually a Manual Handling Risk Assessment should be undertaken using HS&E-FRM-M01-01. This form states that priority should be given to mechanical aids to avoid the risk.

One devise uses the lifting eyes and a trolley to lift the manhole cover. An alternative is the use of a magnetic lifting devise. The cover is unseated using the high leverage lifting points on the trolley, connecting to the end loops on the bar through the lifting hook. The cover is raised and pivoted clear of the chamber. In both devises the operator remains clear of the suspended load and the chamber opening, throughout.

The link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwJfMpm6XYo directs you to YouTube where a video of the equipment can be viewed.

Actions to take on site
Review your risk assessment for lifting manhole covers and investigate if this technology will help reduce the exposure to manual handling.

Ensure that adequate edge protection is installed immediately after the manhole cover is removed to prevent falls from height.

Remember: NOTHING IS SO IMPORTANT THAT IT CANNOT BE DONE SAFELY

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