

Valve Key Operations

Summary

NI Water has issued a previous safety alert advising on the dangers of using worn or damaged aluminium valve keys. Since then there have been a number of valve key related incidents where staff has been injured. Some incidents were a result of how the valve key had been used rather than a fault or failure of any equipment. For example, a valve key not correctly seated resulting in sudden slipping from the valve head or the sudden release of a seized valve.

This alert is to provide staff with some advice on general valving operations.



Recommendations

1. Always work to the risk assessment & training you have been provided with.
2. Be aware of your surrounds and the environment. Ensure that it is safe to operate the valve (suitable signage and lighting as appropriate).
3. Check that the valve key is in good condition before use. Damaged or worn valve keys & equipment should not be used. Replace and dispose of damaged items in a way that prevents their use.
4. Check the valve key and valve head for debris/ grit before use & clean if required.
5. Ensure the valve key is correctly seated on the valve before attempting a turn.
6. Only use the approved handle provided with the valve key. Extensions to the handle should not be used to exert additional force on the key and valve.
7. Extra care should be taken when operating suspected seized valves due to the potential for sudden movement. Consider assistance & valve replacement if the fault is persistent.
8. Large diameter valves should be opened gradually to prevent damage to the network.
9. All new approved aluminium valve keys provided through the existing NI Water supplier are now welded top and bottom.
10. Any aluminium keys not currently welded (top and bottom), or showing any sign of wear/tear should be immediately removed from service, replaced and appropriately disposed of.

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