

Safety Alert

Lighting Column Failure

13 January 2020

Background information

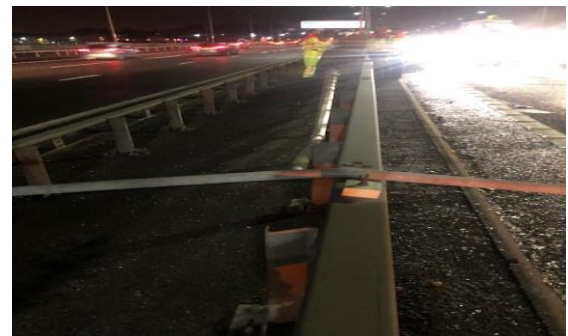
A 12m steel lighting column collapsed within the central reservation of the motorway. Fortunately, no harm was caused.

The cause of failure was due to extensive internal corrosion just below ground level.

Subsequent inspections identified and removed a further 69 columns (from 320) with similar defects at or below ground level, at risk of collapse.

Investigation findings

- The steel columns were 25-year-old and located in an environment exposed to the effects of applying winter road salts, promoting corrosion.
- A detailed structural inspection (including pull testing) was undertaken in 2013, which gave an indicative 5-year residual life.
- Further testing was overdue, but not undertaken as the columns were planned to be removed imminently as part of a major project
- Reliance on visual lamp column inspections alone provides insufficient assurance of column asset condition, particularly below ground level.



Recommendations

- Risk based decisions to depart from Standards should be physically recorded.
- The effects of corrosion requires assessment and effective management.
- Remind Area teams Highways England standards and procedures require physical non-destructive testing of lighting columns over 15 years old.
- SES will consider issuing further guidance with respect to identification of most at risk columns and appropriate physical testing.