

Safety Bulletin



Quick Erection Antenna Mast (QEAM) Safety OND SB11-004



Working on and around masts and their associated antennas can be hazardous and precautions must be taken to prevent injuries to personnel and/or damage to equipment.

Recently two Soldiers were on top of a CONNEX attempting to secure a QEAM that was attached to the CONNEX after receiving a Weather Advisory for high wind conditions. The weather conditions had already deteriorated by the time they were making adjustments and a sudden gust of wind snapped the mast. As the QEAM fell it struck the Squad Leader in the back knocking him into the other Soldier and parts of the antenna struck a third Soldier on the ground. They were all taken to the Aid Station for initial evaluation and treatment. The Squad leader was transferred to JBB for a CT scan for a possible broken back and paralysis of the lower extremities. Due to his extensive injuries he was then sent to Germany for an MRI and further evaluation. Fortunately, he did not sustain any fractured vertebra or permanent paralysis and he was transferred to home station for stabilization and recovery.

Accident Factors

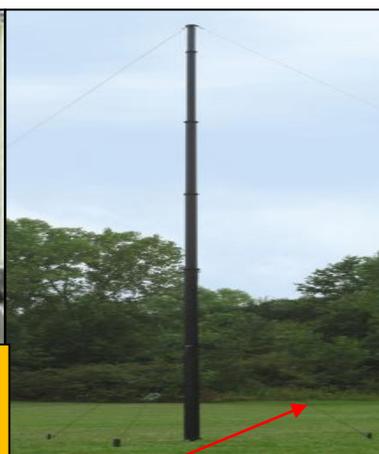
- Poor planning by maintenance personnel
- Inadequate Risk Management by the crew tasked with the operation
- Lack of leader action in aborting the maintenance procedure in unsafe conditions

Mitigation Factors

- *Never* work on or around masts and antennas during inclement weather conditions
- Always wear the Personal Protective Equipment such as: Helmet, gloves, and eye-pro
- Monitor weather forecasts to ensure time is available to lower or secure the QEAM and antenna
- Ensure scheduled Preventive Maintenance is conducted to reduce component failures and negate urgent maintenance during extreme weather
- Conduct initial/refresher training for personnel working with masts and associated antennas
- When possible, implement a Limited Access Zone: A safe horizontal distance around the antenna site equal to the height of the QEAM plus 4 ft



Ensure the QEAM is *secure* prior to vehicle movement



Mark guide wires to prevent tripping hazards



ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE