

Council fined after man falls while installing town's Christmas tree

- 20-foot tree toppled during Bury Market installation
- HSE has well-established guidance on safely working at height

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council has been fined £200,000 after a man was injured while installing the town's Christmas tree.

Council employee James Lyth was using a scissor lift to straighten the 20-foot tall Christmas tree when it toppled over with him still in the basket.



The tree was being installed by an external company at Bury Market on 21 November 2022, in time for the town's annual festivities at Christmas shopping destination.

The 32-year-old operations manager suffered concussion and severe injuries to his right-hand side, including bruising to his ribs. He needed an operation to his leg and was left using a wheelchair and crutches after sustaining a large cut to his leg. Mr Lyth was off work for two months and was subsequently only able to return on restricted hours and duties as he continued his recovery.

Working at height remains one of the leading causes of workplace injury and death and HSE has detailed guidance on [working safely at height](#).

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Bury Metropolitan Borough Council had failed to provide Mr Lyth with any training in the safe operation of the scissor lift and had failed carry out a sufficient risk assessment for this work activity.

The investigation also found that a suitable risk assessment of the work would have identified the dangers involved and the need to restrict the use of scissor lifts to those with appropriate training.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The organisation was fined £200,000 and were ordered to pay costs at a hearing at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 2 April 2025.

HSE inspector Leanne Ratcliffe said: "This was a very serious incident.

"It is important for industry to understand the importance of a risk assessment and training when using elevated platforms. Access to these platforms should be limited to those trained and anyone who isn't trained shouldn't be allowed to use them.

"If this sort of work is not planned and controlled to a high degree, then there is a very high likelihood of a potentially fatal fall, or one resulting in very serious injury."

The prosecutions were supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Hannah Snelling.

Notes to Editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).
5. Guidance on [working safely at height](#), and [with elevated platforms](#) is available.

[Defence company fined £800,000 after man shot on MoD range](#)

A defence technology company has been fined £800,000 after an employee was shot during testing of ammunition at a Ministry of Defence (MoD) range in South Wales.

The father-of-two was left paralysed below the shoulders after being shot by a 5.56mm bullet fired from a gun, 570 metres away. The incident happened on 25 March 2021 during a NATO ammunition quality assurance trial at the MoD Ranges in Pendine.



The man was shot while in front of this target on the range

The now 42-year-old's role had been to check the impact of bullets on a metal target and was in front of the target when the bullet was fired.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found QinetiQ Limited had failed to adequately risk assess the trial activity. As a result they did not have adequate precautions in place to ensure that no one was near the target when the rounds were fired.

- Employers are required by law to protect both their employees and others from harm and assessing the risk is just one part of the overall process and [HSE guidance is available to explain what steps should be taken](#).

QinetiQ Limited of, Cody Technology Park, Ively Road, Farnborough, Hampshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety At Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £800,000 and ordered to pay £8,365 in costs at Llanelli Magistrates Court on 3 April 2025.



The bullet was fire from a gun more than 500 metres away

HSE principal specialist inspector Stuart Charles said of the employee: "His life and those of his wife and two children have been devastated by the severe injuries he has suffered.

"Simple and inexpensive steps could have been taken which would have prevented this incident.

"This case shows employers the importance of continually assessing the way they work and not just accepting historical practices."

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement Lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Imogen Isaac.

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5. HSE guidance about [managing and assessing risks](#) is available.

[Company fined £2.5m following uncontrolled acid releases](#)

- Schools were closed following hydrochloric acid release
- Joint investigation and prosecution by HSE and the Environment Agency
- Guidance is available on maintaining equipment in large chemical plants

A chemical manufacturing company has been fined £2.5m following two incidents of uncontrolled releases of highly corrosive acids at its site in West Thurrock, Essex.

Industrial Chemicals Ltd pleaded guilty following the incidents in 2020, one of which caused the release of a hydrogen chloride gas cloud that resulted in schools in the area to close.

The first incident on 6 January 2020 resulted in an uncontrolled release of

hydrochloric acid from three chemical storage tanks.

Three hundred thousand litres of the substance was released via poorly maintained pipework. As it came into contact with the atmosphere, this created a hydrogen chloride gas cloud which spread to nearby towns. Nearby CCTV footage shows the atmosphere being engulfed in the cloud within 60 seconds.



CCTV footage shows the atmosphere being engulfed in the hydrogen chloride gas cloud within 60 seconds

Local businesses were affected and schools in West Thurrock and Chafford Hundred were advised to close. Due to the risk to local residents of exposure to the migrating fumes, advice was provided by emergency responders to close windows and doors.

Hydrochloric acid is highly corrosive and hydrogen chloride is a toxic gas. The incident lasted approximately 24 hours.

On 29 August 2020 another uncontrolled release, this time of sulphuric acid, occurred due to a crack in a pipe. This resulted in the release of 87 cubic metres of sulphuric acid being released into the atmosphere. The valve that was designed to control leaks in the event of cracks did not operate as intended, leading to the uncontrolled release, increasing the risks to operators and delivery drivers.

Sulphuric acid is highly corrosive and can cause lung damage if high levels are breathed in.

A joint investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency (EA) into the release of the hydrochloric acid in January 2020 found that pipework had not been installed, maintained and inspected sufficiently which led to several smaller pipe failures before the more serious loss of containment. The investigation found that pipework had not been properly maintained, and a protective chemical-resistant coating had not been applied to the full height of containment walls.

An investigation by HSE into the release of sulphuric acid in August 2020 identified a lack of inspection and maintenance of the pipework and valves. The leak continued for a further two days due to the inability to operate a manual valve to stop the process. The loss of containment was eventually stopped on 31 August 2020. Fortunately, no one was harmed.

Both HSE and industry guidance highlight that [work equipment](#) must be maintained in efficient working order and in good repair. Work equipment includes the defective valve and pipework at the site. Suitable and sufficient inspection and maintenance regimes for pipework and valves significantly reduces the likelihood of the [loss of containment of dangerous substances](#) to protect both employees, other workers and members of the public from potential harm.

In relation to the January 2020 incident:

- Industrial Chemicals Limited of Old Power Station site, Stoneness Road, West Thurrock, Grays, Essex, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 for the loss of containment of hydrochloric acid.
- Industrial Chemicals Limited also pleaded guilty to two charges of breaching environmental permit conditions in contravention of regulation 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 in that the company did not take appropriate measures to minimise the risk of unauthorised emissions of hydrochloric acid/acid fumes to air and land with the potential to impact receptors offsite including the local community.

In relation to the August 2020 incident:

- Industrial Chemicals Limited pleaded guilty to Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

In a hearing at Westminster Combined Court last week (Friday 28 March), the company was fined £2.4 million in relation to charges under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and a further £100,000 in relation to charges under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

HSE principal inspector Maria Strangward said: “The uncontrolled release of significant quantities of hazardous substances in these cases was entirely avoidable.

“An appropriate planned maintenance programme should have been in place to ensure that pipes do not fail, and valves operate. The proactive maintenance of pipework and safety critical valves is extremely important at sites such as these.

“Industrial Chemicals Limited’s West Thurrock site is classified as an upper tier site under the Control of Major Accident Regulations 2015, so that businesses and communities are protected, and potential major accidents avoided.”

Adrian Sherman, Environment Agency regulatory officer, said: “The Environment Agency takes its regulatory responsibilities seriously to protect communities and the environment.

“We expect businesses to comply with their environmental permits and will take appropriate enforcement action when they fail to do so. In this case, an

appropriate inspection and maintenance programme could have prevented an environmental and public health risk.”

The HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Samantha Wells, who said: “At the sentencing hearing the judge noted the previous history of poor health and safety standards by this defendant, which included previous incidents relating to poor maintenance of pipework at this site showing a careless attitude to health and safety which was treated as an aggravating factor which uplifted the sentence imposed.”

The EA prosecution was brought by EA lawyer Laura King.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found at: [Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance – L22](#) and [A guide to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations \(COMAH\) 2015 – L111](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).

About the Environment Agency:

1. The Environment Agency is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
 2. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. Where businesses fail to meet their obligations, the Environment Agency takes appropriate enforcement action, ranging from guidance and advice to prosecution. Our enforcement work helps ensure a level playing field for legitimate businesses and prevents environmental harm.
 3. Industries with potential to pollute must operate under permits with strict conditions to protect the environment and local communities.
 4. For more information visit www.gov.uk/environment-agency.
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April is Stress Awareness Month: tackle stress in the workplace with five steps in five weeks

This April, Britain's bosses are being invited to follow five simple steps to prevent and reduce stress in their workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Working Minds campaign has called on employers to support workers mental health during Stress Awareness Month.

Over the course of the month, employers are encouraged to focus on one of the campaign's 5 Rs for each of the five weeks. They are: to **Reach out** and have conversations, **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress, **Respond** to any risks you've identified, **Reflect** on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it **Routine**.

Preventing work-related stress isn't just the right thing to do by workers, it's the law. All employers are required to prevent work related stress to support good mental health in the workplace.

The Working Minds campaign brings together a range of tools and support to help businesses and workers including free online learning, Talking Toolkits, risk assessment templates and examples.

Kayleigh Roberts from HSE Engagement and Policy Division says: "By being proactive, you can improve productivity, reduce sickness absence and help retain valued workers. Employers are required to assess the risk of work-related stress impacting their workers, and act on the risks identified.

"As well as guiding you step by step, we provide all the practical templates, tools and resources you need to get started or, you can use it as an opportunity to review what you already do. A huge part of this is making it part of your everyday working life, not just a one-off tick box that gets forgotten about."

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Factors like skills and experience, age, or disability may all affect someone's ability to cope.

If you are an employer looking for support, a good place to start is to [register for free bitesize learning](#).

You can also...

- Use a [Talking Toolkit](#) to help structure your conversations
- [Download a risk assessment template](#) to develop your processes for preventing or managing stressors
- Find out about NEBOSH HSE [Certificate in Managing Stress at Work](#)

- [Sign up to the monthly newsletter](#) to help you champion the Working Minds campaign beyond April.
- [Watch the webinar](#) with Healthy Working Wales, which is also available with [Welsh subtitles](#).

Notes to Editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click [here](#).
3. There are 36 Working Minds campaign partners including; Mind, ACAS, CIPD, NEBOSH and IOSH.
4. For press and media enquiries please contact enquiries@hse.gov.uk

[Health Board fined for failing to manage patients risk of falling](#)

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has been fined £250,000 following failures relating to patient falls in its hospitals.

Three elderly patients sustained falls in 2022 and 2023 and they all sadly died. The cause of death of two of them was identified as being as a direct result of falling.

Richard Hughes, 84 and Gwilym Williams, 74, fell at Ysybty Gwynedd in Bangor in January and June 2022 respectively, while Nancy Read, who was 93, fell at Wrexham Maelor Hospital in January 2023.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) was initially investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following two other patient falls in 2020, one of which resulted in fatal injuries.

As a result, HSE took enforcement action against BCUHB that required it to implement an effective patient fall management system, including:

- ensuring patients had appropriate falls risk assessments (with clear risk controls detailed);
- that the risk assessments were reviewed and updated accordingly in the event of a patient's health deteriorating;
- that staff received training on patient falls.

The enforcement action also required BCUHB to review the patient falls policy and to ensure the entire system worked effectively. A follow-on inspection made in November 2021 identified that BCUHB were still not managing patient falls and this resulted in a further action being taken.

However, over the next two years, the three patients died and BCUHB had not implemented a system to identify and manage patient falls quickly, or provide staff with updated training.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at work Act 1974 and have been fined £250,000 and ordered to pay costs of £11,766.

Speaking after the case HSE inspector Sarah Baldwin-Jones said “This is the second time this health board has been prosecuted in less than 18 months.

“These incidents could so easily have been avoided had the BCUHB followed their own adult falls policy. Effective management of patient falls includes thorough risk assessment, effective communication on risk management, monitoring and re-evaluation should the patient condition deteriorate.

“Staff and agency workers need to follow the same training pathway, ensuring those responsible for falls management have the skills to make appropriate decisions.

“Unfortunately, these actions were not always followed and as a result some patients suffered falls, which resulted in two preventable deaths.”

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and paralegal officer Sarah Thomas.

Further information:

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