

# Durham car cleaning firm fined for putting workers at risk of electric shock

A County Durham car valeting company has been fined after failing to comply with enforcement notices and putting workers at risk of electrocution.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors visited UK Express Valeting Limited's premises at Abraham Industrial Estate, Bishop Auckland, on 22 March 2022 after a previous visit in March 2020 resulted in enforcement action being taken. This was in relation to [unsafe electrical installations](#) and [inadequate welfare facilities](#).

During the inspection in March 2022, several electrical installations were found to be badly maintained and dangerous. A prohibition notice was served by HSE, preventing the use of some of the work equipment which posed a risk of electric shock or electrocution.



Dangerous electrical wiring was one of the failings identified by inspectors

HSE also served UK Express Valeting Limited with an improvement notice requiring them to arrange for an electrically competent person to undertake a thorough electrical inspection and test of the fixed electrical installation and associated electrical equipment. The company was required to arrange for any defects identified to be rectified by an electrically competent person.

However, despite four other visits taking place over the following seven months, the company failed to take any action. At one these visits, it was noted that the electrical installations had further deteriorated and two further prohibition notices were served on 26 July 2022, prohibiting the use of a roller shutter garage door control and a vacuum cleaner, as both had exposed live conductors which could cause an electric shock or electrocution.

The HSE investigation found workers at UK Express Valeting Limited were put at significant risk of electric shock or electrocution by the lack of maintenance and failure to put right the faults found with the electrical

installations. It was also found that the company did not have [valid employers liability compulsory insurance](#).



Dangerous electrical wiring was putting workers at risk

UK Express Valeting of Abraham Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland, Durham, pleaded guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – for failing to comply with an Improvement Notice, Section 33(1)(g) and section 1(1) of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969.

The company was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £42,389.80 in costs at Peterlee Magistrates' Court on 16 May 2023.

HSE inspector Clare Maltby said: "Companies are responsible for making certain that their electrical installation and equipment are maintained to prevent danger.

"All car wash and valeting centres must properly maintain their electrical installation and equipment.

"Failure to comply with enforcement notices is a serious offence and HSE will not hesitate to prosecute where companies fail to take the action required."

HSE inspectors were supported on visits to the company by police officers from North East Regional Organised Crime Unit (NEROCU).

Following the investigation, Kev Benson, the North East GAIN Co-ordinator and Disruption Team Manager for NEROCU, is asking residents to be vigilant.

He said: "This is yet another example of the ongoing work with partners to safeguard workers. No one should have to work in conditions that are unsafe and a risk to themselves and others.

"Where necessary we will support action taken by partners to ensure no laws are being broken and any enforcement notices are complied with.

"I am asking members of the public to continue to remain vigilant and report any concerns or information you have about dangerous working conditions. By doing so you're helping keep your community safe for everyone."

## 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. 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 guidance on [electrical safety and maintenance](#), [employers' liability insurance](#) and the [provision of welfare facilities](#) is available.
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## [Company fined after worker's leg amputated](#)

A waste and recycling company has been fined after an employee's leg was amputated after he was run over by a telehandler.

The man, who was 51 at the time, was working for Eco Waste and Recycling Limited at the company's waste transfer site on Hullocks Pit Hill, Newnham Road, Newnham, Hertfordshire, when he was struck from behind by a reversing telehandler on 16 March 2022. He had been sorting recyclable materials by hand.

This incident led to the man's right leg being amputated from above the knee.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Eco Waste and Recycling Limited failed to adequately segregate vehicles and pedestrians at its site and failed to act quickly on the findings of risk assessments.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Waste and recycling industries – Collection – Skip hire and waste transfer \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Eco Waste and Recycling Limited, of High Firs Crescent, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, pleaded guilty to breaching 4(1) of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and Regulation 5(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The company was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £3,102.50 in costs at St Albans Magistrates' Court on 4 May 2023.

HSE inspector Adam Johnson said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Segregation measures should have been in place between vehicles and pedestrians."

“Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate action against those that fall below the required standards.”

**Notes to Editors:**

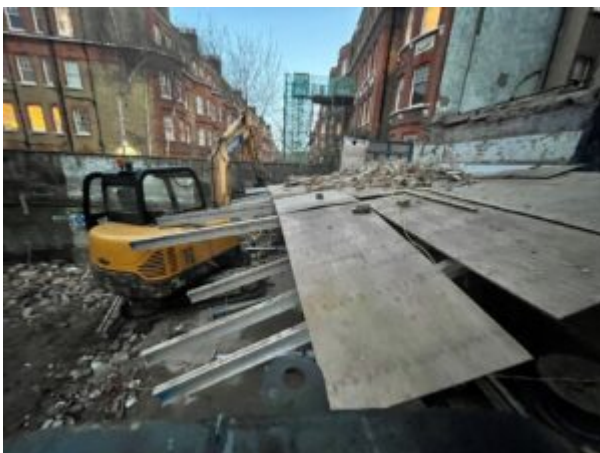
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## [Building company fined £234,000 after worker falls from platform](#)

A building company has been fined after a demolition worker suffered serious injuries after falling from a platform in Kensington in London.

Ovidiu Dobra was working for Henry Construction Projects Limited at a building site on Kensington High Street when the incident happened on 2 March 2021.



Mr Dobra suffered serious injuries after the platform he was working on collapsed

Mr Dobra, 51 at the time, was working on the ten-foot high platform when it collapsed. He sustained serious injuries to both legs which has left him with ongoing long-term difficulties with movement, basic functions, and ability to work.

Mr Dobra, who is from Romania, was working on the demolition of a building as

part of the construction of a new commercial and residential building.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found Henry Construction Projects Ltd failed to take appropriate precautions to ensure the safety of persons [working at height](#).



The site on Kensington High Street before the platform collapsed

Henry Construction Projects Limited, of Church Road, Cranford, Hounslow, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £234,000 and ordered to pay £12,369 in costs at Westminster Magistrates Court on 16 May 2023.

HSE inspector Saif Deen said: “Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries.

“This incident was completely preventable.

“Employers must control the risk of working at height to ensure that it is carried out in a manner which is so far as is reasonably practicable safe.”

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3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE guidance on [working at height](#) is available.

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## [Birmingham wall collapse deaths: Directors jailed after five men lost their lives](#)

Two company directors have been jailed after a wall collapsed killing five men – with both firms having to pay combined fines of £1.6million.

Wayne Anthony Hawkeswood and Graham John Woodhouse ran a Birmingham [metal recycling business](#) where a wall toppled over and killed five workers.

The pair were found guilty on multiple counts after a five-week trial at Birmingham Crown Court in November last year. They were back at the same court on Monday 15 May where they each received nine-month custodial sentences.



- The five men from left: From left to right the five men are: Saibo Sumbundu Sillah, Ousman Kaba Diaby, Almamo Kinteh Jammeh, Bangally Tunkara Dukuray and Mahamadou Jagana Jagana

Ousmane Kaba Diaby, Saibo Sumbundu Sillah, Bangally Tunkara Dukuray, Almamo Kinteh Jammeh and Mahamadou Jagana Jagana were all killed when a 45-tonne wall collapsed on them. They were agency workers working at the site occupied by Hawkeswood Metal Recycling Ltd and Shredmet Ltd (now trading as Ensco 10101 Ltd), in the Nechells area of Birmingham.

At nearly 12-feet high, the Vee block wall was built on site and made up of 30 concrete blocks – each the size of a domestic fridge-freezer and weighing the same as a large family car. The blocks are designed to slot together.

The five men were part of a group of eight agency workers brought to the site on 7 July 2016. At around 8am that morning, seven of them began the process of clearing the bay of swarf – metal filings – to make way for more scrap

metal.

Just 15 minutes after starting work, the wall collapsed on the five men, killing them instantly. A sixth man suffered serious leg injuries, while another was fortunate enough to have just stepped outside the bay before the wall came down. The eighth member of the team was not in the bay at all as he had gone to another part of the site to retrieve brooms.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the wall had previously been taken down then reassembled. The adjoining bay was full of around 263 tonnes of scrap metal briquettes – each roughly the size of a large tin of vegetables. The combined weight of the machine-pressed metal briquettes was the equivalent of six fully loaded HGVs.

Following the incident, the defendants appointed structural engineers who carried out an assessment, the result being a reduction in wall heights and bays being clearly marked with maximum fill lines.

Both directors were found guilty of four charges each – failing to discharge the duty to which they were subject by virtue of section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Hawkeswood Metal Recycling Limited and Ensco 10101 Limited (known at the time as Shredmet) were also found guilty of the two identical counts bringing the total number of convictions to 12.

Hawkeswood Metal Recycling was fined £1million while Ensco 10101 Limited must pay £600,000. The judge also ordered £775,000 to be paid in prosecution costs.

Speaking after the sentencing, HSE Principal Inspector Amy Kalay said: “I hope the families and friends of the men who died find some comfort in today’s sentencing.

“The investigation into this incident was long and complex. Five men lost their lives in the most appalling of circumstances. Their deaths should not have happened. They went to work to earn a wage; that cost them their lives.

“These five men were placed into a working environment that was fundamentally unsafe. The failings of the companies and individuals brought to justice today were responsible for this tragedy.

“Health and safety regulations save lives. We will always take action against those who fail to protect their workers.”

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  3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
  4. HSE guidance on [scrap and metal recycling](#) is available.
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## [HSE to prosecute Cambridgeshire County Council over busway deaths](#)

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecution is being brought against Cambridgeshire County Council following the deaths of three people in separate incidents, and the life-changing injuries sustained by a fourth person in a collision, on Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.

Jennifer Taylor, 81, died when she was hit by a bus as she crossed the busway on foot at Fen Drayton on 17 November 2015.

Steve Moir, 50, a cyclist, died after colliding with a bus on the section of the busway between Cambridge railway station and Long Road on 13 September 2018.

Kathleen Pitts, 52, who was on foot, died after being hit by a bus on the section of the busway, also between Cambridge railway station and Long Road on 26 October 2021.

The fourth person, a teenage cyclist, was seriously injured when he collided with a bus in the guided section of the busway parallel to Kings Hedges Road on 9 November 2021.

Cambridgeshire County Council will face a charge under s3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The charge follows an extensive investigation by HSE, which is Britain's workplace regulator.

A first hearing date will be confirmed in due course.

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