

Firm fined following outbreak of Legionnaires' disease

A plastics manufacturing company in West Bromwich has been fined after it put workers and the public at risk of being infected with potentially deadly bacteria.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated Riaar Plastics Limited after members of the public became infected with Legionnaire's disease in September 2020.

Five people were infected with the potentially deadly lung infection. One person was taken to intensive care and put on a ventilator after being infected.

Riaar Plastics Limited was fined for failing to manage the risk of Legionella. HSE found the water-cooling towers inherited by Riaar Plastics Limited at its site on Black Lake, West Bromwich, were in an extremely poor condition. This allowed Legionella bacteria to grow in the water-cooling towers and pipes, exposing employees and members of the public to risks of significant ill health.



One of the water-cooling towers at Riaar Plastics Limited



One of the water-cooling towers at Riaar Plastics Limited

People can get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in small droplets of water in air that contains the Legionella bacteria. HSE guidance can be found at: [Legionella and legionnaires' disease – HSE](#).

Riaar Plastics Limited, of Black Lake, West Bromwich, West Midlands, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay £11,000 in costs at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 2 June 2023.

This prosecution was led by HSE principal inspector Jenny Skeldon and HSE senior enforcement lawyer Kiran Cassini.

HSE principal inspector Jenny Skeldon said: "The condition of the cooling towers at this site was the worst I had ever seen. The Legionella exposure risk to employees, site visitors, neighbouring duty holders and members of the public was extreme in nature.

"Exposure to Legionella can cause death or serious illness where water cooling systems are not been managed effectively. It is really important that proactive management of the risk from Legionella bacteria is taken seriously. There are well publicised and simple precautions for companies to take that if followed will ensure that employers manage and control the risk."

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. hse.gov.uk

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Bedding manufacturer fined £80,000 after machine operator loses fingers

A leading bedding manufacturer has been fined £80,000 after an employee suffered horrific injuries when his hand was drawn into a machine.

John Cotton Group Limited faced legal action following the incident on 9 December 2020 – which resulted in the machine operator having three fingers on their left hand amputated.

The incident occurred due to there being [inadequate procedures in place to allow safe interventions with machinery](#).

The 36-year-old, from Wigan, had noticed a fault with the machine and in an attempt to resolve the issue, tried to power down the machine to allow access. However, the machine was still moving, and his left hand contacted dangerous moving parts.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Enforcement Lawyer Radha Vaithianathar told Manchester City Magistrates Court how the man's fingers were partially severed by the machinery with the remainder having to be surgically amputated at hospital.

An investigation by HSE found John Cotton Group Limited, a leading manufacturer of bedding, had not made adequate arrangements to prevent access to dangerous moving parts of the machine. The company failed to provide a sufficiently robust procedure for powering down the machine to allow safe access. There was also inadequate training, monitoring and supervision of employees for dealing with problems with the machine.

John Cotton Group Limited, of Beaver Court, Lockett Road, Wigan pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and 33(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. act 1974. The company was fined £80,000 and was ordered to pay £4,989.05 costs at a hearing at Manchester City Magistrates Court on 5 June 2023.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Thomas Delroy said: "This severe injury could have been easily prevented and the risk should have been identified."

"Employers should make sure they have a robust procedure for isolating machinery, and they have appropriate training, supervision and monitoring to

ensure it is adhered to”

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 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. Guidance on [machinery interventions and safety](#) is available.
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[HSE inspections target woodworking businesses to tackle occupational lung disease](#)

are endangering workers’ lives by failing to implement the measures required to prevent or control exposure to wood dust says the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Supported by HSE’s Dust Kills campaign, which provides free advice to businesses and workers on the control measures required to prevent exposure to dust, HSE inspectors across Great Britain will be visiting businesses within woodworking industries such as sawmilling, manufacture of composite boards, and carpentry, focusing on the dangers of respiratory risks from wood dust.

Woodworking industries have the potential for high incidence rates of occupational ill-health caused by worker exposure to inadequately controlled wood dust in the workplace, such as sino-nasal cancer, occupational asthma and dermatitis.

Throughout 2023/24, inspectors will be looking for evidence that employers have considered the control measures required to reduce workers exposure to wood dust, that workers understand the risks of exposure to wood dust, and effective control measures have been put in place to protect workers from harm. Inspectors will take enforcement action when necessary to make sure workers are protected.

In 2022/23, HSE carried out more than 1,000 woodworking inspections and found 78% of businesses were not compliant in protecting workers from respiratory sensitisers (*primarily dust from hardwoods, softwoods and composite materials*

such as MDF). This resulted in 402 enforcement actions taken by HSE, highlighting particular areas of concern around provision and use of suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) and Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), as well as the administration of health surveillance.

HSE's head of manufacturing David Butter said: "Around 12,000 workers died last year from lung diseases linked to past exposure from work, and there are an estimated 19,000 new cases of breathing and lung problems each year, where individuals regarded their condition as being caused or made worse by work.

"Wood dust can cause serious health problems. It can cause [asthma](#), which carpenters and joiners are four times more likely to get compared with other UK workers, as well as sino-nasal cancer. Our campaign aims to help businesses whose workers cut and shape wood to take action now to protect their workers' respiratory health."

HSE inspections in 2022/23 identified four main areas of concern, where businesses failed to adequately implement the control measures required to protect workers. These were housekeeping (including dry sweeping of wood dust), Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) maintenance and thorough examination, selection of and face fit testing for Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE), and health surveillance for exposure to wood dust.

David added: "Through visiting woodworking businesses, our inspectors are able to speak to a range of employers and look at the measures they have in place to comply with the guidance and protect workers from respiratory diseases such as occupational asthma and sino-nasal cancer.

"Our inspection initiative aims to ensure employers and workers are aware of the risks associated with the activities they do. They must recognise these dangers and manage these risks through reducing exposure. Employers need to do the right thing, for example, through completing a risk assessment, ensuring workers are trained, reducing exposure using LEV and using suitable RPE to protect workers, where required."

For more information visit the [Dust Kills: Wood Dust campaign page](#).

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2. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
3. The inspection programme will be supported by HSE's 'Work Right Dust Kills' campaign, aimed to influence employer behaviour by providing guidance to woodworking industries.
4. Further information about HSE occupational lung disease statistics can

be found: [Occupational Lung Disease statistics in Great Britain, 2022 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/occupational-lung-disease-statistics-in-great-britain-2022)

[Drones used to spray pesticides in Great Britain](#)

Drones are being used to spray pesticides for the first time in Great Britain in a trial of new technology.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved the trial that allows plants and weeds growing around railway infrastructure to be treated by pesticides applied by drones.

The technology was discussed at an international conference organised by HSE. The regulator leads a global partnership looking at how drones could be used to apply pesticides in the future.

The railway trial allows chemical herbicides to be sprayed on railway bridges, tunnel portals and viaducts. The technology could potentially be used in other industries.



A demonstration of the drone technology took place on May 25

Professor Andrew Curran, HSE's chief scientific adviser, said: "Although we need to carefully consider both the environmental implications and potential consequences for human health, the emerging evidence suggests using drones to spray pesticides could have a positive impact on safety and the environment. If applied in the right way drones could spray more safely and more economically. This could have big implications for other industries especially agriculture."

HSE plays a prominent role in an initiative designed to help regulators around the world assess the risks associated with applying pesticides by drone.

Applying Pesticides Using Drones took place in York between 23 and 24 May and was sponsored by the OECD Co-operative Research Programme: Sustainable Agricultural and Food Systems.



Professor Andrew Curran, HSE's chief scientific adviser and Dr Richard Daniels, CRD Director spoke on the opening day of a two-day conference

Attendees heard from internationally recognised regulators, researchers and industry experts from North America, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

"We believe we have a key role in driving international developments which can help improve safety and protect people, places and the environment around the globe," said Professor Curran.

In the trial, drones developed by commercial firm Railscape Ltd have been used to control plants and weeds growing around railway infrastructure. This is normally done by workers manually, who often must work at height, overnight and on a tight time schedule when trains aren't operating. It is hoped using drones will reduce the risk of injury to workers and make the application more efficient and effective.

Ed Lewis, operations and project manager at Railscape, said the drone had been designed to spray pesticides in areas that are difficult or hazardous to reach using conventional working at height methods.

"While it was designed to operate in the railway environment, there are wider opportunities for other applications in equally challenging environments," he added.

"The Railscape solution is a UK first and we are currently the only company offering this service."

About HSE

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Company fined as worker crushed by 700kg crate

A glass distribution and installation company has been fined £200,000 after an employee broke two ribs and fractured his vertebra after being crushed by a crate.

The man, 29, was working for PSV Glass and Glazing Limited at the firm's warehouse at Stakehill Industrial Estate in Middleton.

He had been moving a crate of replacement glass, weighing approximately 700kg, with the help of another colleague on 16 June 2021.

The pair placed the crate on the top of a set of skates and intended to push the load across the warehouse. While doing this however, the crate became unbalanced and fell, trapping the worker underneath.



The crate that was being moved by the two workers

He suffered two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a fractured vertebra. Six screws and a plate were inserted to fix the vertebra.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found PSV Glass and Glazing Limited's system of work used to move crates in the warehouse was hazardous. When a crate was balanced on the skates it became unstable, increasing the risk of the load tipping. In addition to an inadequate system of work to move the crates, the company also had no suitable risk assessment despite a previous similar incident. Had the warehouse been less congested, a more suitable method of moving the crates could have been used, such as a proprietary pallet handling truck.

HSE guidance can be found at: [HSE – Moving goods safely](#)

PSV Glass & Glazing Limited, of Hillbottom Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £4,897.05 in costs at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 26 May 2023.

HSE inspector Sharon Butler said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks when moving and handling loads and that the correct equipment is identified and used."

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