

# £1.2m fine for chemical company after explosion

A chemicals company has been fined £1.2m following an explosion at its site at West Thurrock.

Only two people suffered minor injuries following the blast, which happened during the operation of the hydrochloric acid (HCl) burner on 26 September 2013.

Chelmsford Crown Court heard that the newly installed HCl burner being used by Industrial Chemicals Limited had only been used a handful of times when the explosion occurred. The plant site had been under construction for several months and was undergoing commissioning.

Two workers were injured; one suffered a grazed knee from a breeze block dislodged from the wall of the control room and the other a minor caustic burn caused by a drip from the plant in the minutes following the explosion.

The explosion effectively destroyed a tank and displaced a scrubber column upwards and at an angle. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), acting as part of the COMAH competent authority, found that in an attempt to address risks from chlorine, the company routed the vent gas containing mostly hydrogen through to the plant emergency scrubber where it was able to come into contact with oxygen or chlorine which found an ignition source and then exploded.

Industrial Chemicals Limited of Stoneness Road, West Thurrock pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4 of the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999, was fined £1.2 million and ordered to pay costs of £35,854.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector said: "The investigation has shown that the potential for an explosive atmosphere had not been identified during the design, construction or commissioning of the plant. This incident could have been avoided if simple checks had been carried out.

"Duty holders should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the require standard."

A COMAH Prohibition Notice was served following this incident.

## **Notes to Editors:**

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

[www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Under the Control of Major Accidents Hazards (COMAH), HSE works as part of the Competent Authority. Visit [www.hse.gov.uk/COMAH](http://www.hse.gov.uk/COMAH) for further information.

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

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## [Company fined after worker suffers crush injuries](#)

A Lancashire based company Spectral Colours Limited (SCL) has been fined after a worker was crushed under machinery.

Manchester Crown Court heard how the 57-year old employee of SCL was cleaning the dispersion mixing machine at the company's premises in Crawford Street, Manchester on 30 April 2014. The worker sat on one of the clamping arms when it suddenly toppled over and pinned the worker's leg underneath the machine.

The employee suffered a fractured ankle and serious crush injuries to his foot.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company failed to properly secure the machinery on site to the ground, increasing the risk of the machinery toppling over and injuring employees.

Spectral Colours Limited of Crawford Street, Rochdale, Lancashire has today pleaded guilty of breaching Regulation 20 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

The company has been fined £3000 and ordered to pay costs of £22,444.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Tim Beaumont said: "This case highlights the need for all duty holders to ensure all machinery in their workplaces are properly fixed and maintained to the required safety standard.

"If Spectral Colours had been more thorough in ensuring that the installation of the machinery was completed properly then this accident wouldn't have happened."

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## **10 facts about Scotland's colleges and universities**

Whether a young person chooses university, college, vocational training or employment, the SNP government is committed to ensuring that they get the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Here are 10 facts about Scotland's colleges and universities, under the SNP.

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## **News story: Service marks 100 years of women's contribution to UK Armed Forces**

Today, Friday 7th July, The Royal British Legion led celebrations marking the centenary of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) – the first all-female unit in the UK Armed Forces. The event also recognised the contribution of women to the UK's Armed Forces military capability over the past 100 years.

WAAC was founded on 7 July 1917, enabling the enrolment of women into the British Army for the first time. Women were issued their uniform before taking over from men in roles such as mechanics, drivers, cooks, clerks, drivers, mechanics, telephonists, and telegraphers. A total 58,000 women served in the Corps before it was disbanded in 1921, with 82 women dying in service, and five being awarded the Military Medal.

200 current Servicewomen, from helicopter pilots to weapons engineers, joined

veterans at the ceremony which included a traditional Drumhead Service.

Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon said:

From the fields of Flanders to the deserts of Afghanistan, women have served in our Armed Forces over the past century with distinction and commitment.

It is essential that roles in our Armed Forces are determined by ability, not gender, and it is therefore very good news that women are joining us in greater numbers and serving in diverse roles including close combat operations.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin MP who attended the ceremony said:

I'm delighted to be here today to mark this special anniversary, and also to pay tribute to the thousands of brilliant women in our Armed Forces past and present who serve our country, keeping us safe.

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## [News story: Defence Secretary reaffirms leadership in NATO on Washington visit](#)

During his first meeting with US Secretary for Defense James Mattis in the American capital, the Defence Secretary said Britain had shown leadership across the alliance and has helped encourage an increase of more than £40bn of defence investment by NATO states.

The UK has consistently met NATO's 2% of GDP spending target, Sir Michael said in Washington, and has led by pressing allies to increase their own fiscal commitment. In the past year NATO countries have committed around £43bn more towards collective defence, at a time when a large number of assurance and deterrence activity is taking place across NATO's eastern European flank.

He set out how the threats to security are growing and changing, but reflected on the fact that since his visit to Washington in 2015 the UK has delivered by committing to 2%, sailed her first Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carrier and sent thousands of personnel on NATO exercises and deployments by land, sea and air.

Sir Michael said:

Today our nations are facing a wave of multiple, concurrent, diverse global threats. From Islamist extremism, Russian state aggression, sponsors of terror and North Korea testing nuclear bombs and firing off missiles, to the insidious spread of misinformation and Wannacry like cyber attacks. Such events demand an international response, so we see Brexit as an opportunity not to step back from European defence but to step up to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security. In particular, we're bolstering our bonds with NATO, the cornerstone of our defence.

Sir Michael met Secretary Mattis in Brussels last week at the NATO Defence Ministerial meeting, where they discussed a range of security issues including Syria, where US jets struck in response to a chemical weapon attack. Sir Michael explained at the Pentagon how the UK is acting to protect the UK and allies from threats.

He said:

We're performing a pivotal role in the Counter-Daesh Coalition, attacking Daesh positions, training local forces, using our cyber capabilities to disrupt their activities, an overall contribution which is second only to the US.

And he discussed the impending fall of Mosul, a key location in Daesh's ill-fated, so-called caliphate.

He said:

It's striking to think that back then Daesh were closing in on the gates to Baghdad, yet now they are close to defeat in Mosul.