

Automotive engineering company sentenced after employee has allergic reaction at work

An automotive company has been sentenced after an employee developed an allergic form of dermatitis after coming into contact with metalworking fluids.

Reading Magistrates' court heard how, on 24 April 2019, an employee at Xtrac Ltd was splashed on the face and upper body with metalworking fluid whilst cleaning out a grinding machine at a manufacturing site in Thatcham. As a result of the contact the employee had an allergic reaction, consisting of a very painful burning sensation, inflamed, broken and oozing skin, and was diagnosed with allergic contact dermatitis. This is a permanent allergy, which means that even small quantities of this substance can result in a further serious reaction. The employee received medical advice that they could no longer continue in their job as it was a risk to their health.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Xtrac Ltd had failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to identify the potential for exposure to the hazardous chemicals. The company had not implemented necessary controls to prevent skin contact. This was particularly important in this case as the company was already aware the employee had a history of dermatitis.

Xtrac Ltd of Gables Way, Kennet Park, Thatcham pleaded guilty to breaching section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £639.59

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Ashley Hall said: "Dermal risks from metalworking fluids are well known within industry and there are simple and effective controls available to prevent contact with the skin.

"This serious health condition could have been prevented if the company had carried out the required risk assessment and implemented the necessary control measures, including suitable personal protective equipment, particularly gloves.

"All of these risks and controls are described in HSE and industry guidance, which is widely available."

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](https://www.hse.gov.uk)

2. Further information about working with metalworking fluids can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/metalworking/index.htm>.
3. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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