

Bird feed manufacturer prosecuted after employee's fingers amputated

A manufacturer of prepared bird feed has been prosecuted after an employee suffered life changing injuries when his hand was trapped in an unguarded rotary valve

Cannock Magistrates' Court heard that on 25 July 2017, a production operative had to have three fingers amputated after sustaining injuries at C J Wildbird Foods Ltd while operating a mixing extraction unit at the company's site in Upton Magna, Shrewsbury. The employee had been in the process of levelling out the waste dust that collected in a large bag located underneath a rotary valve on the mixing plant. He lost his balance and began to fall backwards into the bag. As he tried to steady himself, he used his right hand to reach out and grab something. In doing so he unintentionally brought his right hand into contact with the dangerous moving parts of the rotary valve, causing his hand to be jammed.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found there had previously been a guard preventing access, to the dangerous parts of the rotary valve but that this had fallen off over time and not been replaced. The mixing extraction unit had originally been purchased second hand and no suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks arising from the use of this machine had ever been made prior to it being used, so the company failed to identify the risks from the dangerous parts.

C J Wildbird Foods Ltd, of The Rea, Upton Magna, Shrewsbury pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision of Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and Regulation 3(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The company was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,508.61.

HSE inspector Andrew Johnson said after the hearing: "This was an easily preventable incident which has had life changing consequences. It reminds us why there are long established and straightforward regulations requiring dutyholders who procure and use their work equipment to assess the risks and identify and put in place effective measures to prevent access to any dangerous moving parts".

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. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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