

Company fined £160,000 after worker loses legs

A company has been fined £160,000 after an employee lost both legs whilst working at its site near Warrington.

On June 2022, Andrew McAuley, from Runcorn, an employee of William Stobart & Son Limited was picking orders at the firm's warehouse in Appleton Thorn.

The 64-year-old was working in close proximity to a forklift truck (FLT) which was being used to load pallets of slate tiles onto a waiting truck. The FLT was carrying two pallets, one on top of the other. The top pallet was not secured to the one below, and when the driver turned the vehicle, both pallets became detached from the forks, with the upper pallet striking Mr McAuley, crushing his legs.



A pallet of slate tiles crushed Andrew McAuley's legs

Mr McAuley had to have both legs amputated below the knee. He has been left dependent upon a wheelchair and unable to drive or climb stairs, leading to the need for extensive adaptations to the family home.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that William Stobart & Son Limited failed to ensure this area of the warehouse was organised so that vehicles and pedestrians were segregated and circulated in a safe manner and loads were secured so far as was reasonably practicable.



The incident happened at the firm's warehouse in Appleton Thorn, near Warrington

William Stobart & Son Limited, of Ashville Way Industrial Estate, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £160,000 and ordered to pay £4,478 costs at a hearing at Warrington Magistrates Court on 30 July 2024.

The prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Sam Tiger and paralegal Sarah Thomas.

After the hearing HSE Inspector Lorna Sherlock said: "Mr McAuley has been left with devastating and life changing injuries.

"The company failed to implement a safe system of work for loading and unloading activities, thereby exposing employees, and others, to the risk of being struck by loads or workplace vehicles. This case illustrates the consequences of failing to segregate vehicles and pedestrians, and to properly secure loads.

"This injury could easily have been prevented. Employers should make sure they assess work activities sufficiently and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from workplace transport."

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
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 does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).

5. Guidance for [working safely with vehicles](#) and [securing loads](#) is available.