

Company fined £1m as employee suffers serious injuries

A logistics company has been fined £1 million after an employee fell over 10 metres and sustained serious injuries.

Christopher Hooper suffered fractures to his skull, back, pelvis, arm, wrist and ankle after falling 11 metres at DP World Southampton's terminal on 20 September 2022.

The 31-year-old, from Winchester, had fallen through an open hole in the driver's cab of a straddle carrier, landing on the concrete floor below.

The hole had been created by contractors that were replacing a glass floor, exposing Mr Hooper and other workers to the risk of falling from height.



Mr Hooper alongside his fiancée Lydia

Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Mr Hooper's employer, Southampton Container Terminals Limited, trading as DP World Southampton, failed to ensure there was a safe system of work at its site on Western Avenue.

Mr Hooper, who had worked for Southampton Container Terminals Limited since he was 17, had been undertaking routine maintenance work and was unaware of the open hole before falling onto the floor.



The incident took place at DP World Southampton's terminal

The HSE investigation found Southampton Container Terminals Limited had failed to ensure there was a system of work that ensured the replacement of the glass floor and routine maintenance work could be carried out safely at the same time. The company also failed to ensure there was a risk assessment in place and failed to implement its own policy for the use of permits to work whilst working at height.

Mr Hooper, who was 29 at the time of the incident, said in his victim personal statement: "I feel like a puppet in my life who is being moved from therapy to therapy with no control over where I am going. It feels like my life is in a waiting room, early out of hospital I had closer milestones that felt achievable whereas now no one can tell me what I can do next and that is really impacting my day-to-day life as I don't know what the rest of my life will look like."



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Southampton Container Terminals Limited, of Palace Street, Westminster, London pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £1 million and ordered to pay £11,664.59 in costs at Southampton Magistrates' Court on 2 August 2024.

HSE inspector Francesca Arnold said: "This incident has resulted in severe life-changing injuries for Mr Hooper, who is lucky to be alive. His life has completely changed because of Southampton Container Terminals Limited's failure to produce a suitable risk assessment and implement straightforward control measures.

"The hazards of working at height are well known and documented and this prosecution should now remind employers that a failure to manage and implement effective measures can have serious consequences and they will be

held accountable for this failure. Information on working at height safely is freely available on [HSE's website](#).”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Withell.

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](#).