

Company fined £200,000 after worker injured cleaning machinery

A company specialising in the manufacture of stabilisers and additives used in plastic products has been fined £200,000 after an employee suffered serious hand injuries while cleaning machinery.

An employee of Mexichem Specialty Compounds Limited was cleaning the manufacturing line at their site in Chinley, Derbyshire on 21 February 2019 when he was injured. Tonne bags are loaded into a hopper on the line and passed through a rotary valve into final product bags.

The man was attempting to clean a rotary valve, standing with one foot on the machinery framework and the other on a ladder, when he slipped.

As he tried to steady himself, his right hand went into the unguarded rotary valve resulting in a severed fingertip and lacerations to his hand.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company did not have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment or safe system of work in place for cleaning the bagging line.

Operators were also not provided with appropriate information, instruction, and training on how the line should be cleaned. The rotary valve was not guarded and there was no isolation procedure in place for when cleaning was taking place.

The system of work in place at the time of the incident involved working at height, this had not been properly planned.

Mexichem Specialty Compounds Limited, of Beler Way, Melton Mowbray, pleaded guilty to contravening Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,846.78 at Derby Magistrates Court on 6 September 2022.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Lindsay Bentley said: "All operations and tasks, including cleaning, should be risk assessed. A safe system of work should have been produced and communicated to all operators.

"There is plenty of guidance available on the HSE website to help companies implement good health and safety arrangements to prevent such incidents."

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. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Links to further guidance can be found at:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf> – Risk Assessment – A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace,
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l22.pdf> – Safe use of work equipment – Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998,
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf> – Working at height – A brief guide