

Company fined £440,000 after security guard seriously injured

A meat production company has been fined £440,000 after a security guard at an abattoir was seriously injured by a vehicle passing through the site gate.

The 63-year-old security guard, who was working for an independent security company, was on duty at the gated entrance of the Dunbia (UK) abattoir at Hatherleigh, near Okehampton, Devon early on the morning of November 29, 2018.

Her duties included operating the gates to allow delivery vehicles to enter and exit the site. She sustained serious leg and head injuries requiring surgery when she was hit by a vehicle towing a trailer leaving the site. She was holding the gate open at the time.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the system of work was unsafe and that the company's risk assessments did not extend to the security guards. Risks had not been adequately assessed or controlled.

Although there was a high volume of vehicle movements on site there was no segregation between the vehicle routes and pedestrians on site.

Dunbia (UK), of Castle Street, Exeter, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £440,000 and ordered to pay costs of £27,016 and a victim surcharge of £170 at Plymouth Magistrates Court on 12 October 2022.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Victoria Buchanan said: "Employers have a legal duty to ensure that the health and safety of their employees, contractors and members of the public are not put at risk.

"This incident could have been avoided had the company assessed the risks from vehicle movements and implemented safety measures including segregating vehicles and pedestrians."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. 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>