

# Company fined £800,000 after employee suffers serious burns

A chemicals company has been fined £800,000 after a worker suffered life-changing injuries in an explosion.

The employee of International Paint Limited spent eight days in intensive care on life support and has been left with all-over body scarring, partial blindness to one eye, hearing damage, and damage to a knee and shoulder.

He was off work for 16 months.

The explosion at the company's premises in Gateshead on 4 August 2020 caused significant damage to the building.

The employee, who was 49 at the time and from South Shields, was making paint in a large mixing vessel, which involved the use of flammable liquids.

As he was emptying resin pellets from a large bulk bag into the vessel an electrostatic spark was generated, igniting flammable vapour within the vessel, causing a large explosion.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified that the company failed to put sufficient measures in place to control the risk.

This included a failure to use a correctly working extraction system to remove the flammable vapours and effective electrical earthing of the bulk bag to prevent the build-up of electrostatic charge that led to the static spark discharging.

International Paint Limited, of Stoneygate Lane, Gateshead pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £800,000 with £14,032 costs at Newcastle upon Tyne Magistrates' Court on November 30, 2022.

HSE inspector Paul Wilson said: "This incident should serve as an important reminder to industry that fire and explosion can have devastating consequences.

"It is critical that employers fully assess the risk of fire and explosion including the risk from static discharges and put the necessary control measures in place."

## **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. [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
3. Guidance on earthing to counter static can be found at: [Earthing \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk/earthing)
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>