

Company fined after 21-year-old worker dies

A company in Peterborough has been fined £67,000 after a young employee lost his life.

George Setchfield was found unconscious over the side of a large container while working for Electrostatic Magic Limited at the firm's site in Peterborough.

George's mum says his passing has affected "every aspect" of her life.

The 21-year-old had entered the company's stripping shed, which housed an Intermediate Bulk Container (IBC) containing alloy wheel stripper.

He was later found by his manager slumped over the side of the IBC, and could not be revived.



Twenty-one-year-old George Setchfield was found dead in work

George had sustained multiple organ failure and chemical pneumonitis and cutaneous burns from exposure to dichloromethane, hydrofluoric acid and methanol.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance for those [working with dichloromethane](#) is available.

An investigation by HSE found that Electrostatic Magic Limited had failed to control exposure to dichloromethane and hydrofluoric acid. It would have been

reasonably practicable for the company to have installed local exhaust ventilation (LEV), used a hoist or long-handled tools to lower and lift parts in and out of the tank, provide pumped chemical systems to prevent the need to lean into the IBC and finally ensure that any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) provided was suitable for the environment it was being used in.



George had entered the company's stripping shed, which housed an Intermediate Bulk Container (IBC) containing alloy wheel stripper.

George's Mum, Amanda Foster, told Peterborough Magistrates' Court: "Trying to find some level of justice for George has taken over my entire life. I have spent hours going into detail, reviewing, rereading and making notes about how George died and how it should have been prevented.

"This is something that I struggle to accept, how has this been able to happen to my son? George's death has affected every aspect of my life. It has left me with a constant feeling of emptiness and devastation. It will shadow my future forever and I know that my life will never be as it once was. It has shattered my family's lives and changed everyone's life who knew and loved George."

Electrostatic Magic Limited, of Ivatt Way, Westwood, Peterborough, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 7(1) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and Article 67 of the REACH regulation. The company was fined £67,000 and ordered to pay £7,231 in costs at Peterborough Magistrates' Court on 19 January 2024.

HSE inspector Tom Pouncey said: "Our thoughts today are with the family of Mr Setchfield, a young man, who should have returned home safely to his family at the end of his working day, but because of the failings of Electrostatic Magic Limited, he did not, and his family are understandably heartbroken."

"Awareness within the alloy wheel stripping industry of the importance of using appropriate control measures and the dangers of this cold stripping process needs to improve.

"Companies need to understand the dangers of working with hazardous chemicals

and ensure employees are not unnecessarily exposed. Deaths can result from working with Dichloromethane-based stripping fluids. HSE will be inspecting businesses carrying out similar work to ensure suitable health and safety arrangements are in place. If they are not then HSE will take appropriate action.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Jon Mack and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Forman.

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.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.