

Company fined after employees diagnosed with life-changing condition

A manufacturing company has been fined following reports that two of its employees had been diagnosed with hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).

The two staff members at Ross & Catherall Limited – a company that manufactures and supplies metal bars for the aerospace and automotive industries – worked at the firm’s Forge Lane site in Killamarsh, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, in 2019.

The two employees carried out a variety of tasks, which included the use of vibrating tools, throughout the company’s manufacturing process.

Both operators used these tools for extended periods of time, over a number of years, without adequate systems in place to control their exposure to vibration.

RIDDOR reports submitted by Ross & Catherall Limited in May 2019 revealed the employees had been diagnosed with HAVS.

The RIDDOR reports prompted a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation.

The HSE investigation found there was no hand-arm vibration risk assessment in place prior to, and at the time of the workers’ diagnoses, to identify what level of vibration the operators were exposed to. There were also no control measures in place to reduce exposure levels, with reasonably practicable measures only being implemented following HSE’s intervention. Health surveillance was also inadequate. This was not carried out annually and there was no initial health surveillance assessment for new operators. Additionally, referrals were not carried out in a timely manner for those employees displaying symptoms of HAVS.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Hand arm vibration at work \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/handarmvibration/)

Ross & Catherall Limited, of Bretby Business Park, Ashby Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £7605.37 in costs at Derby Magistrates’ Court on 17 July 2023.

HSE inspector Lindsay Bentley said: “Those in control of work have a responsibility to assess the risk from exposure to vibration, put in controls to reduce this risk and ensure that health surveillance is adequate to identify symptoms in a timely manner.

“HAVS can be a life-changing condition which impacts all aspects of your life. Prevention of vibration damage is key and there is plenty of guidance available for employers to help them protect their employees’ health on the HSE website.”

This HSE prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Nathan Cook.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We seek to 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
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>