

# Company fined after worker crushed to death

A company in Kent has been fined £175,000 following the death of an employee.

Liam McArdle, from Gravesend, was fatally crushed by an excavator attachment while working for Erith Plant Services Limited on 21 September 2021.

A demolition grab, attached to an excavator, fell onto the 24-year-old while it was loaded onto a lorry at Erith Plant Services Limited's workshop at Eastern Quarry on Watling Steet, Swanscombe.

Liam's dad says the pain since losing his son has been unbearable.



The incident took place at Erith Plant Services Limited's workshop

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found Erith Plant Services Limited failed to ensure there was a safe method of work while loading and unloading excavators and attachments. The company failed to ensure steps were taken to ensure HGV drivers fully engaged the quick hitch when moving attachments during loading and unloading activities. There was also no defined segregation between vehicles and pedestrians at the firm's Eastern Quarry workshop, nor was there suitable supervision of work activities.

HSE guidance states the plan for any lifting operation must address the foreseeable risks involved in the work and identify the appropriate resources, including people, necessary for the safe completion of the job. More on this can be found at: [Planning and organising lifting operations – Equipment and machinery \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/planning-and-organising-lifting-operations-equipment-and-machinery/)

Declan McArdle said in his victim personal statement: “The pain of losing my son has been and will continue to be unbearable. Liam worked hard and wanted to learn. He wanted to follow in my footsteps, and I was proud of the person he was becoming.

“Liam and I enjoyed spending time together. We would go on truck rallies and to car racing events together. Liam would never really say: ‘I love you, dad.’ It just wasn’t his way.



Liam McArdle

“Rather, he would ask me to go to a racing event with him and I knew that this was Liam’s way of saying he loved me. Liam and I were planning on going to a racing event in February 2022. I went to the event, and I took Liam’s ashes with me so that we could still go together.”

Erith Plant Services Limited, of Queen Street, Erith, Kent pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £175,000 and ordered to pay £37,804 in costs at Woolwich Crown Court on 27 March 2024.

HSE inspector Joanne Williams said: “This tragic death serves as an important reminder that workers need to be trained and that there is always the

potential for an attachment to fall during the operation of excavators. Employers need to ensure that work practices are maintained to keep workers away from the danger areas during lifting activities.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Alan Hughes and supported by HSE paralegal officer Helen Jacob.

**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.