

Company fined after worker loses fingers clearing baler blockage

A Manchester based company has been fined after an employee seriously injured his hand and lost two fingers whilst operating a baler at their site in Bradford Street, Bolton.

Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court heard how, on 2 October 2018, the worker, who had been employed at Wrapp Recycling Ltd for just eight weeks, attempted to clear a blockage in the hopper of the machine while it was switched on.

After removing the guard he leaned into the machine and moved the blocked plastic. The ram then activated, crushing his hand. The incident caused extensive damage to his hand, including the amputation of two fingers for which he is still undergoing treatment. He has since been unable to return to work.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company had installed a removable guard as blockages in the machine occurred frequently. The employees were not informed of the dangers of accessing the hopper while the power was on and HSE found it was common practice to clear the machine by hand with the machine still running.

The investigation also found there was no suitable risk assessment in place which would have identified the necessary control measures needed, such as a fixed guard and a safe lock off.

Wrapp Recycling Ltd of Bradford Street, Bolton pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £13,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,951.90.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Catherine Lyon said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and implementing a safe system of work.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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. www.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>

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