

Company fined after worker suffered serious facial injuries

Manufacturing company, Acrivarn Ltd, was sentenced today for safety breaches after an employee using a 9-inch angle grinder suffered significant facial injuries when the cutting disc came into contact with his face.

Huddersfield Magistrates' Court heard how, on 23 July 2019, the injured person had been assigned the task of dismantling a mezzanine spray booth steel structure in the assembly workshop. To cut through the thicker parts of the steel structure he was using a Bosch nine-inch angle grinder with a steel-cutting disc attached. This equipment requires two hands to operate it.

In order to cut the steel on the higher parts of the booth the employee was using a stepladder and had attached himself to the hook of an overhead crane with a fall restraint harness he was wearing.

When he was standing on the ladder, attempting to cut through a piece of angled steel beam, the grinder kicked back at him and the cutting disc made contact with his face.

The cutting disc caused a deep laceration under his chin, through into his mouth which required 52 stitches. Nerves in his face were damaged, which caused a loss of feeling and movement in his lips and chin. He narrowly escaped making contact with his jugular vein.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the employee had only used the nine-inch angle grinder on one other occasion during his employment with Acrivarn Ltd and had never used it when working at height. At the time of the incident, Acrivarn Ltd had access to more appropriate oxyacetylene cutting equipment and trained operators of such equipment on site.

Acrivarn Ltd of South Park Mills, Hare Lane, Pudsey Leeds pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company has been fined £24,000 and ordered to pay £1,412.24 in costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector David Beaton said: "There was a significant risk of the angle grinder kicking back when cutting through the angled steel.

"Using the grinder at height affected the user's ability to resist kickback forces and placed him in a dangerous position.

"Working at height and demolition work needs to be properly planned, suitably and sufficiently assessed and the most appropriate equipment selected for the job."

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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