

Company fined after worker's fingers sliced off

A vape liquid manufacturing company in Manchester has been fined after a worker lost two fingers and a thumb while clearing a blockage in a packaging machine.

The agency worker at VN Labs Ltd was operating a nicotine liquid pod packaging machine at the firm's premises on Beacon Road, Trafford Park, when it became blocked on 22 October 2020.

While removing the plastic that was causing the blockage, the machine's blade was freed and sliced the worker's right hand.

This led to the amputation of two of the worker's fingers (index and middle) and thumb on his right hand after it became apparent they could not be reattached.

The 43-year-old man, who lives in Manchester, has been unable to work since the incident, now struggles carrying out everyday tasks and has suffered from mental health difficulties as a result of his injuries.

He said in his victim personal statement: "The accident has had an impact on my daily activities because from day one until now I did not have a day without pain. My mind has completely changed. I can't do simple tasks such as prepare eggs for my children. I used to enjoy hobbies like judo, jujitsu and climbing.

"My mental health has suffered because of the accident and is not regular like it was before, there is a lot of instability. I have good days and bad days. My financial situation has deteriorated and I feel like I have no control over anything. I can't work and I have to delay all my bills including my rent. It was never like this before."

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the machine had recently been imported without any guarding. The engineering team at VN Labs assessed the machine and installed a see-through plastic guard over the top. Despite this, access to dangerous parts of the machine was still possible. There was also no formal written risk assessment for the blister pack machines. The company also failed to implement a safe system for clearing blockages and did not effectively supervise and monitor its working processes.



The packaging machine at VN Labs Ltd



The packaging machine at VN Labs Ltd

HSE guidance can be found at: [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

VN Labs Limited, of Beacon Road, Trafford Park, Manchester, pleaded guilty to breaches of Section 2 (1) and 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £180,000 and ordered to pay £7,490.05 in costs at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 16 June 2023.

HSE inspector Joseph Wright said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks and put in safe system of works for the operation of all machinery.

"Companies should recognise the need to ensure machinery is guarded to the standard of UK legislation even when imported from another country because they may have different laws around the standard of guarding."

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.