

Company fined after workers injured in forklift truck crash

A carpet sample book manufacturer has been fined after two workers were seriously injured in an incident where a forklift truck crashed into an onsite refuse skip.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how on 29 July 2019, three workers at Profile Patterns Limited had been emptying waste from plastic bins at their site in Wigan. They were using a forklift truck to raise the bins to a height that enabled a worker at either side of the truck to manually tip the bins into a skip. When one of the bins became trapped between the side of the skip and the forks, the driver of the forklift truck climbed on top of the skip to free the bin whilst the other two employees remained standing at either side of the forklift truck. Another employee was asked to reverse the forklift truck to aid the release of the bin.

However, after reversing, the forklift truck then moved forward crashing into the skip causing the employee on top of the skip to fall. One of the workers standing at the side of the truck became impaled by her right arm by the fork. The two workers sustained serious fractures that required hospital treatment.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Profile Patterns Limited did not take effective measures to ensure the health and safety of employees in relation to the risks arising from the use and operation of forklift trucks. The company failed to implement a safe system of work and provide adequate instruction and training to employees. It was established that tipping bins into the skip in this way was normal working practice that had taken place over a considerable length of time, throughout which employees were placed at significant risk.

Profile Patterns Limited of Makerfield Way, Ince Wigan, Lancashire, pleaded guilty to breaching sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £238.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Emily Osborne said: "The risk of injury from this unsafe working practice was foreseeable and the incident could so easily have been avoided.

"Profile Patterns Limited should have put in place a number of safety measures including appropriate segregation of vehicles and pedestrians and a safe system of work for emptying the bins.

"Those in control of work also have a responsibility to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in order to carry out work safely."

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>
4. More information about safe use of work place vehicles can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/>

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