

Construction company fined after employee crushed by dumper

A groundworks company has been fined after an employee suffered serious internal injuries while working in an excavation at Ghyllgrove Junior & Infants School in Basildon.

Southend Magistrates' Court heard how a site dumper was parked at a slight incline on a heap of excavated soil, adjacent to a partially backfilled trench. The dumper had been left unattended with the engine running when the failure of its handbrake caused it to roll forward into the trench and pin a worker against a pile of stacked concrete blocks. The worker suffered six broken ribs, a collapsed lung, multiple arm fractures and a broken nose.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident, which occurred on 24 February 2017, found the company had failed to regularly inspect and maintain the handbrake of the dumper, to ensure it remained effective. The soil heap had been placed too far back from the excavation, preventing it from acting as a safety barrier and there were no wheel stop blocks or chocks available for use by workers. The investigation also found the company failed to ensure this work was appropriately supervised and effectively monitored by management.

S & K Groundwork Solutions Limited, of Maypole Road, Maldon, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 5(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, and Section 22(2) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, and has been fined £23,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5220.65.

Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Glyn Davies said "This case highlights the importance of regularly inspecting and maintaining construction vehicles, including site dumpers, to ensure they do not deteriorate to the extent that they put people's safety at risk.

"In this case, the employee's life-threatening injuries could have been avoided if the company's management had regularly and effectively monitored and audited their safety management systems. Use of suitable stop blocks near the edge of the trench excavation, or use of wheel chocks, is one such method that may have prevented this incident, which could easily have been fatal."

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>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.