

Construction company worker suffers life threatening injuries

A construction company was sentenced today for safety breaches after a worker suffered life threatening injuries.

Sheffield Magistrates' Court heard that, in September 2016, a 48-year-old employee of K. D. S. Construction Company Ltd was working in a 2-metre-deep excavation when he was struck on the head and pinned down by a large segment of concrete. He suffered multiple injuries, including fractures to his skull, ribs, left arm and vertebrae.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the construction company had been contracted by Abbey Forged Products Limited to carry out groundworks for the installation of a new underground water drainage system at the company's Beeley Wood Works site in Sheffield.

The investigation also found that KDS employees had dug out a number of excavations for the new tanks and pipework. After one tank had been installed, work started on another excavation for a second tank adjacent to the first. While this was being dug, one of the groundworkers was asked to cover over some pipework which was sticking out of the first tank to protect it from being damaged by backfill. When he descended into the excavation to do this, a section of unsupported concrete which was overhanging the excavation broke off and fell onto him.

K.D.S. Construction Company Ltd of Taylors Court, Rotherham pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £70,000 and ordered to pay costs of £4,016.15.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Alison Outhwaite commented: "The employee's injuries were life changing and he could have easily been killed. This serious incident and devastation could have been avoided if basic safe guards had been put in place.

"This case highlights the need to be aware of the risks of working in and near excavations. The groundwork industry need to appreciate the risks even where excavations are thought to be 'shallow' or the ground considered to be stable. As HSE guidance states. 'Any unsupported excavation will be safe ONLY if its sides are battered back sufficiently or if the excavation is in sound rock (HSG150).

"If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to the incident, the life changing injuries sustained by the employee could have been prevented."

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>