

Engineering company fined after 'caring and loving' man killed

A Blackburn-based engineering company has been fined £xxx after a man described as 'caring and loving' by his family was killed after being crushed under a machine.

Connor Borthwick, from Wigan, was working for Partwell Special Steels Limited at its site in Bruce Street when the incident happened on 25 November 2021.

The 22-year-old and another employee were moving a large cutting press machine across a workshop floor when it became unbalanced, resulting in Connor being fatally crushed.



Connor Borthwick was just 22 when he was killed at work

Speaking on behalf of the family, his sister Emily said Connor was her "amazing, caring, loving and funny little brother".

"Everyone loved Connor," she said.

"He was a good soul, and this was evident from the more than 700 people who came to his funeral to pay their respects and share their personal accounts of how Connor had touched their lives.

"He was 22, life hadn't begun for him, and it was over.

"Some simple steps should have been taken and weren't, if they were Connor would be with us today.

"It's hard to explain to people what we have been through, are going through. We don't want another family to go through what we have."

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Connor and his colleague were attempting to move the machine across the workshop, using skates placed underneath.

However, as the machine was being lowered by a jack onto one of the skates, it became unbalanced and fell backwards onto Connor, trapping him beneath. He suffered catastrophic crush injuries and subsequently passed away.

The investigation also found that Partwell Special Steels Limited of Stanley Street, Blackburn, had not undertaken an assessment of the risks involved with moving the machine and that the task had not been suitably planned and no safe system of work had been provided to the employees. Additionally, it was found that neither employee had been provided with suitable and sufficient training to ensure they had the necessary relevant competence to undertake the task. A suitable and sufficient assessment of the suitability of the work equipment provided would have shown that the skates used were unsuitable for this work.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £80,000 and was ordered to pay £6,713 in costs at a hearing at Preston Magistrates Court on 16 December 2024.

HSE Inspector Anthony Banks said: "This company's failures resulted in the death of a much loved young man.

"Those in control of work activities, including the movement of heavy machinery from one part of a site to another, need to assess the risks of that work, and plan a safe way to undertake it.

"This tragic incident could have easily been avoided with the right controls in place.

"My thoughts remain with Connor's family."

The prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Sam Crockett and paralegal officer Gabrielle O'Sullivan.

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences in England and Wales can be found [here](#) and for those in Scotland [here](#).
5. Guidance for [working safely whilst moving heavy loads](#) is available.