

Farmer fined after worker becomes entangled in potato harvester

A farmer has been sentenced after a worker suffered multiple injuries after becoming entangled in the contra-rotating rollers of a potato harvester.

Folkestone Magistrates' Court heard that on 21 August 2020, the worker was involved in unblocking the potato harvester at a farm in Kent when he stepped down on to the rollers. The worker was pulled leg first into the machine and became stuck up to his knee. This resulted in burns to the leg, a pulled hamstring, torn calf, broken nerves and hairline fractures to the knee and ankle.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the farmer had failed to implement a 'safe stop procedure' to isolate power and stop the movement of the rollers before the worker accessed them.

Alan Down of Main Road, Sellindge, Ashford, Kent pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1)(b) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. He was fined £4,992 and ordered to pay costs of £5,805.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Sam Brown said: "Too often we see incidents like this, where maintenance is carried out on live machinery and the principles of 'safe stop' and safe maintenance are ignored.

"The agricultural industry accounts for around one per cent of the workforce in Great Britain, yet it accounts for 20 per cent of worker deaths. Many of these deaths are due to poor working practices while carrying out maintenance on machinery. In addition, many more workers are seriously injured each year due to unsafe working practices while working on machinery.

"Those undertaking maintenance work on agricultural machinery should ensure that the principles of 'safe stop' are followed to prevent people being put at risk of injury."

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/uksi/1998/2306/contents/made

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

4. For more information on safe practices, specifically in relation to agricultural machinery visit: www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/machinery/safe-use-1.htm and www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg241.pdf