

Farming company fined £320,000 after death of “much loved” family man

A company involved in fruit and vegetable production has been fined £320,000 after a man “who always put family first” was killed at a site in Burscough.

Francis Schlachter, known as Frank, suffered severe head injuries when he fell from a skip at a farm operated by M.A.Forshaw Limited on 3 January 2020. The 64-year-old from Southport was described as ‘a rock’ by his wife of 35 years Linda, who said how much he would be missed by his friends and family.

“I have lost my soul mate,” Linda said.

“He was a gentleman through and through, who will live on in our hearts and memories forever.

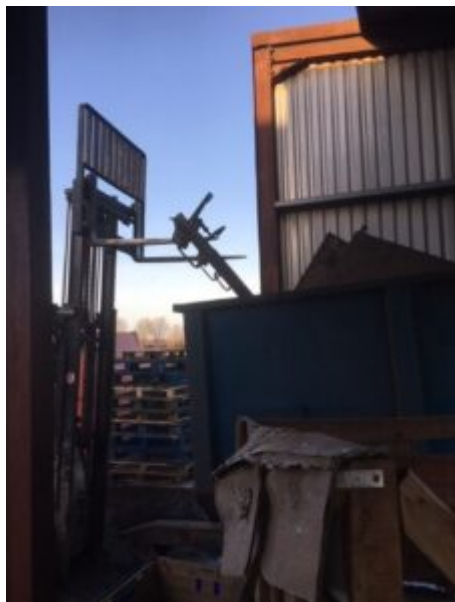
“It is the little things in life that you take for granted, which are greatly cherished now he’s gone and they mean the absolute world.

“Frank was my rock. He was kind, dependable and always put his family first. Since his passing, I have had a fair share of trials and tribulations to encounter and these have been a great challenge without the support of a beloved husband.

“We have all suffered the loss and it will be embedded in our bones forever.

“No man should go to work and never return home after a day of hard work.”

Frank had been working at the site off Marsh Moss Lane, tipping food waste into a skip from a container attached to a forklift truck (FLT). The container could not be securely attached to the FLT, which was known to detach from the vehicle during the procedure. As Frank attempted to manually assist in the operation, he was standing on top of the skip when the container slipped from the FLT causing him to fall to the ground, resulting in fatal head injuries.



Frank Schlachter fell from the top of the skip while working at the site in Burscough

Companies that use work equipment must manage the risks associated with its use. Detailed guidance on the [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998](#) is available. Guidance for those [using lifting equipment for work](#) is also available.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that M.A.Forshaw Limited of Heatons Bridge Farm, Scarisbrick, West Lancashire, had not fully assessed the risks involved in this daily task. Had they done so, the dangers would have been identified. They also failed to maintain equipment in safe working order and to properly instruct staff in safe working practices.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £320,000 and were ordered to pay £4,574 costs at a hearing at Wirral Magistrates' Court on 1 February 2024.

HSE inspector Lianne Farrington said: "This wholly avoidable tragic incident led to the death of a much loved husband, dad and grandad.

"It was caused by the failure of the company to implement safe systems of work, properly maintain work equipment, and sufficiently assess the risks involved in routine work processes.

"If suitable work practices had been in place prior to the incident, Frank's death could have been prevented.

"At HSE, we always stress the need for employers to risk assess tasks by speaking to the employees who undertake the work, and to ensure that work equipment is safe and suitable to use."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Sam Tiger.

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.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.