

Groundworks contractor fined for petrol fire

A Kent groundwork contractor has been fined after a worker sustained serious burns following petrol being thrown on a bonfire.

On 24 June 2020, a 26-year-old groundworker employed by Kent County Surfacing Ltd was working on a new residential development in Ramsgate, Kent when a co-worker used petrol on a bonfire. The groundworker was unaware of this and after he was instructed to light the bonfire, it engulfed him in flames as the petrol vapour ignited. The worker suffered serious burns and underwent two skin graft operations to his left hand, left arm, left side of torso and both his legs.

Groundworkers help prepare a construction site and ensure it is ready for the structural work to start.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company had failed to appropriately supervise their operatives and failed to provide them with the appropriate information and instruction, so far as is reasonably practicable to ensure work was carried out without risks to health or safety.

At Folkestone Magistrates on 10 October, Kent County Surfacing Ltd of 7 Mariners View, Deal, Kent, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 15 (8) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations. They were fined £10,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,333.42.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Ross Carter said: "The operative's injuries are life changing and could have easily been fatal.

"This serious incident and devastation should have been avoided if those in control of the work provided the appropriate supervision, information and instructions to their workers."

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. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>