

# Demolition work must be properly planned and managed to prevent serious injury

Great Britain's workplace regulator is asking demolition and construction firms to double-down on thorough planning, management and control of demolition and refurbishment work.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is asking that businesses properly plan, organise, manage, and monitor their work and use competent people to avoid incidents and ill health amongst their workers and the public.

It is reminding companies that the safer they are, the more efficient they are. Good health and safety management increases the likelihood of contracts coming in on time and within budget with fewer added costs, and often to a higher quality.

In the past year HSE has dealt with prosecutions involving severe injuries and fatalities as a result of poorly planned demolition work. This has included:

- A contractor who suffered serious injuries when a single-story roof he was demolishing by hand, collapsed at a construction site in Cobham, Surrey.
- A 64-year-old man who was killed when a garage wall at a garden in Hampshire collapsed on him during demolition, after a contractor who was operating a digger failed to put an exclusion zone in place whilst carrying out the work.
- A 21-year-old employee who was killed whilst dismantling a redundant grain drying tunnel at a farm in Kent when a farming partnership failed to ensure the integrity of the structure during the dismantling process.
- An employee who sustained injuries to his shoulder, and a fractured heel and ankle when he was hit by falling debris from a garage wall in Clitheroe that was being demolished in an unsafe manner.
- A contractor who was prosecuted for disturbing asbestos and damaging underground cables during demolition works at a site in Blackburn, causing severe disruption to services.
- The operator of a cherry picker who sustained life-changing injuries when he became trapped during a demolition operation at a site in Greater Manchester. A HSE investigation found the vehicle he was operating was not suitable for the task and had not been fitted with proprietary devices to avoid the likelihood of operators being crushed.

HSE is reminding contractors that it is crucial to complete a survey ahead of demolition work including structural investigation and appraisal, which considers the age of the structure, type of construction, history of the building including alterations and design codes used to avoid an uncontrolled collapse. Specific consideration should also be given to the effect of additional weight of demolition machinery and debris on suspended floors; and the risks to nearby buildings and structures.

HSE's head of construction Sarah Jardine said: "Structural instability can be a problem in buildings that are old, decayed, poorly maintained, and in newer buildings that have been badly designed and constructed or abused in use.

"Even sound structures can become unstable because of a lack of planning of construction and demolition work."

She added: "It is easy to get it wrong even on small, straightforward structures, which makes it even more important to put the planning in place when it comes to demolishing large, complex structures. Demolishing these types of structures is a particularly hazardous activity and doing it safely is highly complicated and technical, so relevant expertise is vital. These jobs require careful planning and execution by contractors who are competent in the full range of demolition techniques and have access to designers and engineers with the right knowledge, skills, and experience in this area."

A systematic approach to demolition projects should be a team effort. Clients must appoint professionals who have the relevant skills, knowledge, experience, organisational capability, and who are adequately resourced.

Clients, with the help of the principal designer must provide essential pre-construction information to the relevant designers and engineers. This should include a range of surveys and reports to check for presence of asbestos, structural stability, and the location of above and below ground live services.

It is the principal designer's responsibility to plan, manage, monitor, and coordinate health and safety issues in the pre-construction phase to ensure principal contractors are provided with relevant information to enable them to put safety measures in place. Once the demolition work has begun it is the principal contractor's responsibility to plan, manage and monitor the demolition activities and coordinate work to ensure that it is carried out without risks to health and safety. While site managers must ensure workers are supervised and are following safe working practice.

Sarah Jardine added: "Incidents caused by poor planning and risk management can have substantial human costs that are felt for many years by the victims and their families.

"In addition to the impact on people's lives, incidents can also lead to substantial remediation costs, higher insurance premiums, and, if HSE investigates, court fines and prison sentences, which will inevitably impact reputations.

"As well as being morally right, it is simply common sense and good business to ensure rigorous planning, organising, managing and monitoring of the whole project."

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](http://hse.gov.uk)
  2. More about the regulations referred to in this release can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/demolition.htm>
  3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
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## [Builder fined after contractor sustains serious injuries in a roof collapse](#)

A self-employed builder has been fined after a contractor working for him suffered serious injuries when a single-story roof he was demolishing by hand, collapsed at a construction site in Cobham, Surrey.

Brighton Magistrates' Court heard that, on the 15 April 2019, the contractor was standing on the roof of a partially demolished single-story extension of a domestic building undergoing refurbishment. Whilst he was on the roof, it collapsed and the worker suffered significant injuries to his right leg including a fractured tibia and fibular. Due to the damage sustained, his leg was later amputated above the knee.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found there was no safe system of work in place, as the demolition work had not been adequately planned. The stability of the structure during the demolition work had not been assessed, and there were no measures in place to prevent falls from the roof.

Patrick Sheehan of Walton Street, Walton-on-the-hill, Surrey, trading as Mastercraft Building Services, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (2) of the Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974. He was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £4,383.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Leah Sullivan said: "The contractor's injuries were life-changing and he could have easily been killed. This serious incident and the devastating effects on his life, could have been avoided if basic safe systems of work been put in place.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

**Notes to Editors:**

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  2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
  3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
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## [Waste treatment company fined after employee fatally injured](#)

A hazardous waste treatment company has been fined after an employee died when a forklift truck he was driving overturned and crushed him.

Manchester Magistrates Court heard how, on the 3 April 2017, a worker employed by Lanstar Ltd at Cadishead, Manchester, died because the company had failed to ensure its forklift trucks were being operated safely.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company had not adequately considered the risks of forklift trucks overturning at its Cadishead site and had not ensured seatbelts were being worn by drivers as necessary – despite it being company policy to do so. The potential for forklift trucks to overturn is well known within industry, as is the use of seatbelts to reduce the chance of injury in the event of an overturn.

Lanstar Limited of Liverpool Road, Cadishead, Manchester, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £126,000 and ordered to pay costs of £17,664.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Principal inspector Ian Copland said: “This incident could so easily have been avoided if the driver had been wearing a seat belt as per company policy. However, because the company did not fully appreciate the risk of an overturn, management failed to instruct and supervise their drivers properly. This resulted in seatbelts not routinely being worn by forklift truck drivers on site.

“HSE hope that this case helps to communicate important messages for employers to properly assess risks and put in place appropriate controls.”

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l117.htm>

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

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## [Commercial printing fined after employees injured at work company](#)

A commercial printing company has been sentenced for safety breaches after two employees were injured in separate incidents involving a printing press and a palletising machine.

Telford Magistrates' Court heard how, on 17 October 2018, an employee of Precision Colour Printing in Telford sustained a de-gloving injury when his hand was dragged into the rollers of a printing press, as he cleared a blockage. In a second incident, on 18 January 2019, another employee sustained a broken wrist whilst dealing with a misaligned paper log on a palletiser machine. The clamping arm descended and crushed his hand.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that, in both cases, the risk assessments in place were not suitable and sufficient as they did not consider the risks of clearing blockages or dealing with misaligned paper logs. As a consequence, the employees involved in the incidents had not been provided with safe systems of work, sufficient information, instruction or training for such tasks.

Precision Colour Printing Limited of 1 Halesfield, Telford, pleaded guilty to two counts of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,547.60

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Keeley Eves said: "These incidents could so easily have been avoided by simply identifying and implementing appropriate control measures and safe working practices.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](http://legislation.gov.uk/)

And information about machinery guarding and inspection can be found at [Inspection of work equipment – Work equipment and machinery \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://Inspection of work equipment – Work equipment and machinery (hse.gov.uk))

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

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## [Livestock market prosecuted for unsafe cattle handling arrangements](#)

A livestock market partnership has been prosecuted after an employee was attacked by a horned bull prior to auction.

Telford Magistrates' Court heard how, on 16 September 2019, a drover employed by McCartneys LLP was moving livestock at the auction site when he was attacked by the bull while trying to secure the animal in a pen. He suffered a serious laceration to his leg.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that cattle handling activities had not been adequately risk assessed and the system of work for moving cattle was unsafe. The bull, who had been identified as fractious and potentially aggressive, was being moved a distance of approximately 40 metres to get to designated isolation pens for difficult cattle. The risk of a drover being injured by a bull, potentially agitated by travel and unfamiliar surroundings, should have been eliminated by segregating staff from the livestock. Reasonably practicable steps taken following the incident allowed fractious bulls to be penned immediately after they were booked in at the cattle crush, avoiding any possible contact with droving staff.

McCartneys LLP of The Ox Pasture, Overton Road, Ludlow pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £16,000 and order to pay costs of £5,685.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Wendy Campbell said: "Livestock handling can be dangerous due to the unpredictability of animals. However, injury or death can be avoided if risks are adequately assessed and safe

systems of work using appropriate equipment are introduced to ensure that people are segregated from livestock wherever reasonably practicable.”

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3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Further information about gas safety can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/>