

# Fine for council after man 'who loved life' killed by falling tree

Cheshire East Council (the council) has been fined £500,000 after 'the most amazing man' was killed by a falling tree.

Christopher Hall, 48, from Wilmslow, was walking his dog in The Carrs – one of the town's parks – on 28 August 2020, when the large limb of a tree fell and struck him. He received multiple injuries and sadly died at the scene.

Less than a year before, another large limb from the same tree had fallen off but the incident was never investigated by the council or its ground maintenance company Ansa Environmental Services Limited. As the District Judge sentenced both at Chester Magistrates Court on 8 November 2024 he said that the previous incident should have "acted as a wake-up call".



Chris with wife Fiona and son Sam on their way to Bali

In a victim personal statement, Chris's wife Fiona said her husband "loved life and life loved him".

"Seeing his face, you will get a sense of who Chris was, what he meant to those around him and what we have lost," she said.

"His image serves not only as a tribute to the most amazing man but also a focal point and brutal reminder of why seeking justice matters so very deeply.

"Chris loved life and life loved him.

"His death was utterly senseless and wholly avoidable.

"He was simply walking our dog on a dry, warm, summer's day.

"His loss is colossal, his absence is immense and he leaves a void that can never be filled."



4. The stump of the tree after it had been cut down, with the limb remnants and floral tributes to the right of the pathway

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that when same tree had shed another large limb in September 2019, no investigation was carried out by those responsible to assess whether the tree posed a future safety risk. The council, who controlled the park, did not have a formal overarching tree strategy to manage the risks from trees in public places, and their grounds services contractor, Ansa Environmental Services Limited, had no robust tree management policy.

Organisations who are responsible for trees in areas regularly used by members of the public often adopt a concept called “zoning”, where trees are prioritised for proactive checks based on frequency of public access. HSE guidance is available [here](#).



Chris and his son Sam visiting the Great Wall of China

In his own statement, Chris’s son Sam spoke about the impact his dad’s death has had on his life.

“For the past four years, it’s felt like a long, painful trail – a path we

never wanted to be on," he said.

"Losing dad was losing my life and strength. I miss every little piece of him – his laughter, wisdom, and adventures we shared.

"Our travels ignited a passion in me, but now every journey feels bittersweet without him.

"I've taken up diving, which was one of his dreams for us. Being underwater helps me connect with him."

Cheshire East Council pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £500,000 and ordered to pay £7,284 costs at a hearing at Chester Magistrates Court on 8 November 2024.

There was no separate penalty for Ansa Environmental Services Limited of Middlewich, Cheshire, who also pleaded guilty to breaching 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were ordered to pay a nominal fine of £500. In passing his sentence, the District Judge said it would have been disproportionate to impose fines on both.



3. Contractors taking down the remaining tree limb after the incident

HSE inspector Lorna Sherlock said: "This was an utterly tragic event that has caused the death of a much-loved husband and father.

"Had this public area been better managed, this death might have been avoided. No lessons were learned from the limb falling off the tree less than a year before.

"Cheshire East Council had not adopted a formal overarching tree strategy to manage the risks from trees in public places since it was formed in 2009.

"There was no overarching, consistent risk identification process leading to zoning of trees in all frequently accessed public areas.

“Fiona and the family have shown great courage and fortitude throughout their ordeal.”

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Matthew Reynolds 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 on [managing the risk posed by trees](#) is available.

---

## **[Manchester engineering firm fined after apprentice loses fingers](#)**

A Manchester-based engineering company has been fined £500,000 after a young apprentice lost the use of two fingers when using a horizontal bandsaw.

The apprentice, who was just 18 at the time, suffered the serious injuries to his fingers in an incident at Proline Engineering Limited in Worsely, on 7 November 2022. While one finger was severed completely, the other was surgically re-attached. However, the now 20-year-old has been left with very little movement and nerve damage in that finger. He had only been on a placement with the firm in order to gain experience in fabrication and engineering and was just over a month into this placement when the incident occurred.



The horizontal band saw  
the apprentice had been  
using

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that he was being taught how to weld as part of his apprenticeship placement. This process required multiple sections of steel to be available to practice welding on. After a brief period of verbal training he was permitted to cut lengths of steel into these sections using a horizontal bandsaw, which was located in a shipping container some distance away from the main workshop.

HSE inspector Tracy Fox said: "This young man was at the very start of his career.

"As a result of this companies failures, he sustained serious and irreversible injuries that have been truly life changing. Those injuries have impacted on many aspects of his life and resulted in him having to undergo numerous operations and procedures.

"Once a keen mountain biker and member of his local gym, his hand grip is such that he can no longer take part in those activities that he used to love."





The horizontal bandsaw was located in a shipping container some distance away from the main workshop

On the day the incident happened, he had been working unsupervised when he noticed the bandsaw was not completing a full cut due to a build-up of metal debris underneath the sawblade. As he attempted to clear away the debris, his fingers came in contact with the moving sawblade, instantly severing one finger and severely damaging another. He was taken to hospital where he remained for six days.

The investigation also found that Proline Engineering Limited had failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, resulting in a failure to provide suitable guarding arrangements on the bandsaw and had failed to put in place an adequate safe system of work. It also revealed inconsistencies and inadequacies in the provision of information, instruction, training and supervision for those required to use the bandsaw.



The machine the apprentice was using was subsequently taped off following the incident

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety

at Work etc Act 1974 at Manchester Magistrates' Court. They were fined £500,000 and ordered to pay £5,317 costs at a hearing at on 6 November 2024.

HSE inspector Tracy Fox went on to say: "Had even the most basic safeguards been put in place this incident would have been avoided.

"The risks arising from operating machines such as bandsaws are well known. HSE has clear guidance on the [provision and use of work equipment](#) that can help in preventing incidents like this from happening.

"We would like highlight that all employers should make sure they properly assess their workplace for these risks and act to ensure that effective measures are in place to minimise the risks associated with operating machinery.

"It is crucial that as part of this assessment employers consider and manage any increased risks that may be associated with inexperienced employees."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and supported by HSE paralegal officer Sarah Thomas.

#### 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 on [working safely with machinery](#) is available.

---

## [Fine for construction company after father of three left paralysed](#)

A father-of-three was left paralysed from the chest down after falling through a ceiling at a house renovation in Derbyshire.

Chesterfield builder Andrew Clifford remained lying face down on the floor for around six hours before he was found by a delivery driver. He judged the time by hearing hourly news bulletins from his radio.

Andrew had been working alone installing first-floor joists during the construction of a house on Main Road in Dronfield. The 51-year-old was carrying out the work on behalf of Paul Freeman Limited – a Mansfield-based company he had worked with for around 20 years.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has prosecuted the company for failing to properly plan work at height.

On the morning of 31 October 2022 Mr Clifford slipped and fell from the first floor to the ground below and was left unable to move.

He spent nearly five months in hospital, with the injuries to his spinal cord so serious they left him paralysed from the chest down, with only limited movement in his hands and arms.

Speaking about the day that changed his and his family's lives forever, Mr Clifford said: "The first thing I recall after my fall was landing on my head.

"From that point it was a very strange feeling as from when I landed, I felt no pain and I couldn't understand why or that I couldn't get up.

"My radio was on and I judged the time by the news. After an hour, I tried to move again and this carried on for around three hours. Eventually, I realised this was serious and I thought I'd better stay still as I didn't want to cause further injuries.

"This wasn't the type of street where people were walking past and as it started to get dark I was getting really worried.

"When I was found by the delivery driver I heard him shout out, 'hello, hello, hello'.

"I think I fell between 9am and 9.30 and wasn't found until 3pm."

He went on to say how being a builder was a job he loved and described the impact the incident has had on his everyday life.

"I can't do anything I used to love doing before," he said.

"Simple things like doing the gardening, washing the car and jobs around the house.

"I can't even wash or dress myself now.

"I haven't been upstairs in my house since the accident – my wife and three daughters all sleep upstairs and I sleep alone downstairs.

"Another thing that really upsets me is the thought of not being able to walk my daughters down the aisle when they get married."

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Paul Freeman Limited failed to ensure that work at height had been properly



planned and, as such, no measures had been implemented to prevent falls during the construction of the first floor. Mr Clifford had not been provided with suitable instruction as to how the work should be carried out and was therefore left to work this out on his own.

Working at height remains one of the leading causes of death in the construction industry and [HSE has detailed published guidance on minimising the risks associated with it](#).

Paul Freeman Ltd of Synergy House, Acorn Business Park, Commercial Gate, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 at Derby Magistrates' Court on 4 November 2024. They were fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,263.

HSE inspector Sara Andrews said: "My thoughts remain with Andrew and his family, whose lives have changed dramatically as a result of this preventable incident.

"This case highlights the importance of undertaking a thorough assessment of the risks for all work at height activities and the need to ensure that, where work at height cannot be avoided, suitable control measures are implemented to minimise the risk of serious injury.

"This is even more significant when lone working."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains and paralegal officer Rebecca Forman.

#### **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](#).

---

## **[Stress Awareness Week: Employers have](#)**

## to fulfil legal duty

Britain's workplace health and safety regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), is calling on all employers during Stress Awareness Week 2024 to carry out their legal duty to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health at work.

HSE figures show the average employee suffering from work-related stress, depression or anxiety took an average of 19.6 days off work, almost the equivalent of a month's working days, with an estimated 875,000 cases in 2022/23.

HSE's Working Minds campaign provides employers with simple steps to prevent days lost due to work-related stress.

Kayleigh Roberts, Work-Related Stress and Mental Health Policy Lead at HSE, said: "Our statistics clearly outline that there is a work-related stress issue in Britain and we want this to change. A total of 17.1 million working days were lost in 2022/23, and this figure has a serious cost to the individual and to the business. Employers can make a difference by understanding and fulfilling their legal duty to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health at work.

"That is why we are reminding employers during Stress Awareness Week that it is critical they recognise the signs of work-related stress and get to the root causes behind this issue. Prevention is better than cure and understanding the risks is the first step to preventing them."

The legal duties for employers are:

- Carry out risk assessments for stress and act on them.
- Take steps to prevent work-related stress.
- Organisations with fewer than five employees don't have to write anything down (but it is useful to do this, for future review)
- Organisations with five or more employees, are required by law to write the risk assessment down.

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Factors like skills and experience, age, or disability may all affect someone's ability to cope.

HSE offers employers free risk assessment templates and free online training to help bosses keep their workforce healthy.

Kayleigh added: "Although tackling stress may appear daunting for some employers, failing to recognise the signs of work-related stress and acting on them can result in reduced productivity, sickness absence or even losing a valued member of staff. I would urge all employers who are looking for guidance to seek help through our Working Minds campaign, which helps companies follow five simple steps."

Working Minds calls on employers to follow the five Rs. They are to Reach out and have conversations, Recognise the signs and causes of stress, Respond to any risks you've identified, Reflect on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it Routine.

Andrew Berrie, Head of Corporate Partnerships at Mind, said: "We're delighted to continue to support HSE's Working Minds campaign. Mind has long been working with employers of different sizes and sectors to help them create mentally healthy workplaces, but as these insights show, this has never been more important.

"While many of us will face pressure in our working lives, unchecked and unmanageable pressures can lead to strain and can have a debilitating effect, resulting in stress. Stress can cause mental health problems, and make existing problems worse. For example, if you often struggle to manage feelings of stress, you might develop a mental health problem like anxiety or depression.

"It is vital that employers take steps to mitigate against work-related stress and create an environment in which employees can have open and honest conversations about triggers of stress and poor mental health. This can start with just a simple, person-centred conversation between managers and their teams."

Jenny Scott, Head of Communications at NEBOSH, said: "The statistics show a worrying picture of the mental ill health that people experience because of their work. But it doesn't have to be this way. We are delighted to continue our support for the Working Minds campaign, which provides great resources for employers who want to foster good mental health and prevent work-related stress. We will also welcome the HSE's Phoebe Smith to the NEBOSH Online Conference this November where she will guide delegates through the essential steps of creating a work-related stress risk assessment."

There are three main reasons employers should prevent work-related stress and support good mental health; it's the law, it's good for business and it's the right thing to do.

What can employers do during Stress Awareness Week?:

- [register for our free online learning](#)
- [download a risk assessment template](#)
- see the [Talking Toolkit](#) for help structuring your conversations
- [access resources](#) to share with others

#### **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. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click [here](#)
3. For press and media enquiries please contact [media.enquiries@hse.gov.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@hse.gov.uk)

---

# School trust fined after pupil injured

A school trust in Surrey has been fined after part of a pupil's finger was amputated.

The five-year-old boy, a Year 1 pupil at Danetree Primary School in Epsom, had been leaving the toilet on 15 June 2022 when his right hand slipped and went into the hinge side of a door.

There was no door guard installed and he trapped his right hand in the door.

This led to the tip of his middle finger becoming detached as his right hand was stuck in the door.

A teacher found the tip of his middle finger, and the boy underwent surgery to re-attach his finger at St Georges Hospital in Tooting, London.

Although younger pupils in Key Stage 1 were taught in a newer building where hinge guards had been fitted on the doors, the incident occurred in a separate building where the older children in Key Stage 2 were taught.

The Key Stage 1 pupils would use the Key Stage 2 building at least once a week to use its library and learn about music and science. While in this building, the Key Stage 1 pupils were allowed to use the toilets unsupervised.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found GLF Schools, the trust that runs Danetree Primary School, had failed to identify the risk to its Key Stage 1 pupils while using the toilets. This meant hinge guards were not installed on the toilet doors of the building where Key Stage 2 pupils were taught.

GLF Schools, of Picquets Way, Banstead, Surrey, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The trust was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £6,875.70 in costs at Staines Magistrates' Court on 30 October 2024.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said: "This little boy and his family could have been spared a lot of pain and upset if the trust had installed widely available, effective and inexpensive hinge guards on the doors the young children had access to. I would ask all schools to review their estates to make sure they have hinge guards where needed so no other children are hurt in this way when at school."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyers Jayne Wilson and Jon Mack and supported by HSE paralegal officer Melissa Wardle.

**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.
4. HSE made an application for a reporting restriction during this prosecution. This reporting restriction prohibits the publication of any information which may lead to the identification of the injured pupil.