

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

The immense contribution made by women experts in science and technology to the work of Great Britain's workplace regulator is being recognised.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is highlighting the impact of its female staff on [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#).

The event, which was started by the United Nations, is in its eighth year and is aimed at recognising the work of women in science and to encourage young girls to see science as an industry they could enter.

HSE employs women in a range of scientific disciplines who make a vital contribution to keeping people safe at work.



Zoe Gould

They include work psychologist Zoe Gould who joined HSE in 2017 as an apprentice. She now has a degree in Criminology and Psychological Studies and is working towards an MSc in Psychology.

Zoe works out of HSE's base in Science and Research Centre in Buxton and is part of the Human Factors Team. She is involved in a variety of projects including workplace safety culture and behaviour change.

Zoe, who lives in Buxton with her husband and three cats, said: "Being a woman in science, and in a position of positive influence in the world of human factors and psychology, is incredibly important.

"There are still areas of industry that have a long way to go in creating equal working environments and I am proud to have the opportunity to contribute towards these changes through my work."



Susy Brescia

Susy Brescia, who was born in Italy, has a PhD in Occupational Toxicology and Epidemiology and is an expert on the effects of chemicals on hormone systems. She has been at HSE for 24 years and lives in West Lancashire.

She is the head of HSE's Toxicology Team. She works with academia, industry and other government departments to develop guidance and standards for risk assessments.

Susy, a mother-of-two, said: "I have always been fascinated by our understanding of the world and the blocks of life. I feel privileged to work in an area where I can continue to ask some very fundamental questions.

"I am proud of working for HSE and to apply my scientific skills for the benefits of society overall."



Sam Hall

Samantha Hall is a physicist working in HSE's Exposure Assessment and Control Team and was recently awarded Chartered Physicist status by the Institute of Physics.

Sam lives in Stoke-on-Trent with her three-year-old rescue dog Holly and was a physics teacher before joining HSE in 2014.

Also based in Buxton at HSE's Science and Research Centre, she has recently worked on HSE's response to COVID-19 exposures relating to the suitability of

personal protective equipment (PPE). She also plays an active role in encouraging young people into science as a career through the [STEM Ambassadors network](#).

In celebrating the day Sam added: “I love being a scientist because finding answers to important new questions is a great challenge and extremely rewarding. Every day is different, I’m always learning, and I get to have a lot of fun doing it.

“Society has finally realised that diverse teams are stronger so it’s important to have female representation in science. We should continue to highlight the great work that women in science do to inspire the brilliant female scientists of the future.”

If you want to read more about the work of the women we’ve featured here as well as our other women scientists, and understand how our science and evidence is having a positive impact on protecting people and places, see our latest [Annual Science Review 2022](#).

If you are interested in working for HSE, visit our [latest vacancies pages](#).

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. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.

Two companies fined more than £380k after worker fell through roof

Two companies have been fined more than £380k after a worker fell through the roof of a retail unit in Milton Keynes.

The roofer, who was 32 at the time, fell more than 20 feet through a roof light on to a suspended ceiling at Unit 103, Watling Street, on 19 July 2019. The man landed on the floor below and broke his ankle.

Brackley Industrial Maintenance Ltd, a specialist roofing contractor, had been contracted by principal contractor STP Construction Ltd to carry out roofing works. This work was part of a wider construction project at a retail unit used by Matalan and Carpet Right in Bletchley. The roofer was required to work on the roof of the building and carry out work on roof lights.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found there was ineffective planning of access arrangements to and on the roof by STP Construction Ltd, resulting in workers having to pass fragile materials before they could make use of the fall arrest system installed there. The investigation also highlighted that Brackley Industrial Maintenance Ltd failed to ensure the provision and use of physical means to either prevent or arrest falls.

STP Construction Ltd, of Woodside Walk, Whinfield Industrial Estate, Rowlands Gill, Tyne And Wear, pleaded guilty to contravening Regulation 13(1) of Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The company was fined £320,000 and ordered to pay £8,538 in costs at Oxford Magistrates' Court on 10 February 2023.

Brackley Industrial Maintenance Ltd, of Avon Dasset, Southam, Warwickshire, pleaded guilty to contravening Regulation 9 (2) of the Work at Height Regulations. The company was fined £68,000 and also ordered to pay £8,538 in costs at Oxford Magistrates' Court on 10 February 2023.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Jenny Morris said: "This incident could have easily been avoided. Assessing and planning work at height is essential to ensuring that suitable and sufficient measures are in place to prevent falls from height.

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

Advice on [working from height](#) including [key messages](#) about doing it the right way is available.

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

[£100k fine for care company after tragic death of woman](#)

A supported housing company has been fined £100k after a disabled woman in

their care died after choking on a marshmallow.

Shirley Breeze, who had severe learning disabilities, as well as being diagnosed with epilepsy and dyspraxia was in the care of Ark Housing Association Limited when the incident happened at her home address in Cowdenbeath, Fife.

Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court heard how the 64-year-old was given the marshmallow – which was an unsuitable food item for her prescribed diet – by one of the company’s support workers on 30 November 2019.

Miss Breeze began to choke soon afterwards and although the support worker correctly followed first aid procedures, was unable to dislodge the marshmallow. The support worker carried out CPR until paramedics arrived to provide additional emergency assistance. Paramedics were successful in removing the marshmallow, but Miss Breeze then suffered two cardiac arrests and a seizure, which led to her being placed in an induced coma. She passed away on 2 December 2019.

An investigation carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Miss Breeze had been the subject of an assessment by Speech and Language Therapy following a prior choking incident. It was advised that she be placed on ‘a Texture Type E (soft) diet’. There was evidence that requirements of her Type E diet were not known, understood, or implemented by all of her support workers. Ark Housing Association Limited failed to provide support workers with adequate training to ensure that all aspects of a Type E diet, now known as an IDDSI Level 6 diet, were understood and followed.

Ark Housing Association Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and were fined £100,000.

Speaking after the case HM Inspector, Kerry Cringan said “This was a tragic and deeply upsetting incident for all involved, particularly the team who had cared for Miss Breeze for many years.

“Ark Housing Association Ltd had identified the risk of choking and had taken steps to ensure the care plan reflected this risk.

“However, they failed to provide support workers with adequate training so that they understood the foods textures that would pose a challenge for Miss Breeze.

“This failing ultimately led to the death of a vulnerable person.”

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[“I knew he was dead” – neighbour recalls Land Rover horror](#)

HSE has guidance on [working safely under motor vehicles](#) being repaired and has also issued a safety alert for [air suspension systems on vehicles](#).

A Dorset man who found his friend and neighbour crushed to death under a car has urged mechanics and car enthusiasts not to cut corners.

Leslie House, 61, a self-employed agricultural engineer who was only months from retirement, was repairing a Land Rover Freelander for a customer in May 2020.

His neighbour Terry Bishop, a retired safety consultant in the nuclear industry, was asked to go and check on Leslie, known to everyone as Les, who was working on the vehicle on his driveway at Higher Muckleford near Dorchester.



Leslie House, with his dog Ebby

“Nothing looked out of the ordinary at first,” said 65-year-old Terry. “I called out to Les several times but he didn’t respond. When I reached the front of the vehicle I could see Les’ legs sticking out with his feet flopped over to the sides and he was unresponsive to me.

"I grabbed his legs and tried to pull him out but couldn't move him. It was then that I noticed the vehicle was off the wooden blocks he had been using. I tried to push the vehicle backwards up onto the blocks but it was too heavy. I immediately rang the emergency services for help.

"I felt for a pulse, but there was none and I suppose at that point I knew he was dead, but it doesn't stop you trying does it? I ran to another neighbour for help, and she together with myself and my daughter again tried to move the vehicle back up onto the blocks and off Les, but the Land Rover was just too heavy."

Les was pronounced dead at the scene by the emergency services. Terry told police that he found the vehicle's handbrake was not on.

A single man known widely throughout the community, Les lived, together with his dog Ebby, next door to his mother June House. In the last few years of his life he had become her primary carer. She suffered from an untreatable degenerative spinal condition which meant she was in constant pain, largely immobile and virtually house-bound.

The task of breaking the tragic news to June fell to Terry. He said: "It was a surreal experience. It just didn't sink in, either to June or myself."



Terry Bishop, in front of the scene of the incident

Les House was known for his expertise in maintaining Land Rovers following decades of experience gleaned from working with a nearby servicing and parts specialist. "There were very few faults that he had not previously come across or didn't know how to overcome," said Terry.

Reflecting on what went wrong on the day of Les' death, Terry said: "The job he was doing was probably something he would have done hundreds and hundreds of times before. But for some reason on that day the handbrake wasn't on. Truthfully, he shouldn't have been using wooden blocks either.

"At the end of the day, this tragic accident was down to Les. It was his

mistake by putting the vehicle up on those blocks. That said, given the kind of man he was, I know Les would want others to learn from his mistake and prevent further loss of life.

“There must be hundreds of near misses out there, where someone manages to get out just in time. But the simple message to the trade and car repair enthusiasts alike, is don’t cut corners. Cutting corners kills.”

Les took a keen interest in all things rural, with his real passion being vintage tractors and ploughing. He was a long-standing member of the West Dorset Vintage Tractor and Stationary Engine Club (DVTSEC), serving on its organising committee for many years. He was also a member of The Society of Ploughmen.

He was a staunch supporter of local charities. In addition to the extensive donations made by DVTSEC to a wide-range of causes and groups every year, Les and two friends organised an annual ploughing match, the proceeds of which were given to support the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, a charity both he and his mother were firm proponents of.

“Les was someone I knew for 20 years. During that time we had got to know one another well and become good friends. We often popped into one another’s houses for a cup of coffee and a chat.

“He was on the cusp of retiring and had big plans. He was actually planning some projects with myself. At the time of his death, the country was in the middle of a national lockdown, but Les was raring to get going as soon as it ended.

“I know my friend lived his life the way he wanted, but the way it ended for him, which was so avoidable, really saddens me. I still miss him popping his head up over the garden fence for a chat or offering me some eggs.”

Les’ mum June died in June 2021. “I firmly believe Les’ passing hastened her end,” reflected Terry.

The death of Les House was raised with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) but it was not reportable under the RIDDOR framework, so no HSE investigation was carried out.

The workplace regulator did however submit a report to the Coroner for Dorset, who, after an inquest, returned a verdict of accidental death.

HSE has guidance on [working safely under motor vehicles](#) being repaired and has also issued a safety alert for [air suspension systems on vehicles](#).

HSE’s advice to the trade:

Never work beneath a vehicle that is only supported on jacks:

- Use axle stands that are in good condition and inspected every year
- Use stands on firm, level ground and securely located under a strong point on the vehicle

- Securely chock wheels remaining on the ground
- Do not exceed the rated capacity of the stand

Never work beneath a cab or tipping trailer unless it is propped:

- Always prop cabs, trailers etc that could drop under their own weight
- The prop should be locked in position before gaining access
- If there is no prop fitted, or if one is fitted but you are unsure it will be effective, provide your own

Never crawl beneath a vehicle fitted with air suspension unless it is properly supported:

- Prevent movement of air suspension, either by using suitably rated props or stands to prevent the chassis lowering or by deflating the system
- Don't tamper with the ride height for the purpose of recovery or repair

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2. More information on incidents that should be reported to HSE can be found here. [Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences RIDDOR \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

[Mechanics warned of the life-](#)

threatening dangers of working under vehicles

- Twenty-one workers in motor vehicle repair industry killed in last five years, HSE figures show.
- More than half of these deaths (13) were caused when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported.
- Mechanics urged to challenge "this will only take me a minute" culture.
- Classic Motor Cars Ltd supports HSE's call for better safety with motor vehicles.

Leading voices in motor vehicle repair have teamed up with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to warn of the dangers of working under vehicles without proper equipment.

Figures recorded by HSE in the five years up to March 2022 show that 13 workers in the motor vehicle repair industry were killed when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported. Since April 2022, HSE has become aware of another four cases of workers being crushed to death by an incorrectly supported vehicle.

Leslie House, 61, was working outside his home in Dorset in May 2020 when he was crushed to death by the Land Rover Freelander he was underneath, which had rolled off the wooden blocks Les used to prop it up.



Leslie House, with his dog Ebby

Les was a self-employed agricultural engineer, repairing the car for a customer, and was only months from retirement. He was pronounced dead at the

scene by the emergency services.

Official and anecdotal reports of a wide range of working practices gone wrong are leading to fears mechanics and enthusiasts are putting their lives in danger routinely.

HSE has guidance on [working safely under motor vehicles](#) being repaired and has also issued a safety alert for [air suspension systems on vehicles](#).

Classic Motor Cars (CMC), experts in classic car restoration with their own dedicated workshop, are supporting HSE's call to the industry.

"I am saddened but not surprised to hear of these tragedies," said Tim Griffin, Production and Engineering Director at CMC.

"The situation could get worse as people and businesses may cut costs with higher energy bills", said Tim, who oversees a team of experienced engineers and technicians. "My plea is that it's never a good time to cut corners – the stakes are too high."

Fiona McGarry, an HSE inspector who works with the motor vehicle repair trade said: "One death is too many – to us, these tragedies could easily have been avoided, but they keep happening. Sadly, the phrase we hear too often is 'this will only take me a minute'. It is crucial the correct equipment is used when working under vehicles."



HSE's Fiona McGarry

The annual death rate in the motor vehicle repair industry is 1.62 deaths per 100,000 workers – around four times the average rate across all industries. In total, 21 workers in the motor vehicle repair industry have been killed in the last five years – 13 of which were caused by work under a poorly supported vehicle.

As Britain's workplace regulator, HSE is officially notified of work-related fatal and certain non-fatal accidents across England, Scotland and Wales. Alongside the 13 deaths, there are many more non-fatal injuries and near

misses following work under poorly supported vehicles.

Fiona McGarry continued: "While our figures relate specifically to motor vehicle repair, work on vehicles happens across industries including transportation and agriculture. We all need to ensure work on vehicles is carried out safely, regardless of sector.

"We are becoming increasingly concerned about the scale of the issue. Failure to learn from near misses or injuries will risk lives.

"Some of these issues relate to smaller garages – places that are hard to reach. We have always had a strong relationship with the motor vehicle repair sector, and we respect the expertise of these small businesses.

"But as the issue has persisted, we needed to raise awareness of the issue together. It is therefore important CMC and the Garage Equipment Association are encouraging everyone who works on vehicles – at work, or at home – to check HSE's guidance.

"There are simple control measures which can avoid tragic cases like that of Les House."

Julian Woods, CEO of the Garage Equipment Association said: "We consider health and safety to be of the utmost importance to our industry and any loss of life should be considered an unacceptable situation.

"We drive to improve health and safety not only for our members but in the industry as a whole. It's all too easy to think it will never happen to me or it will only take a second to sort, so skip safety items to get the job done quickly, but these statistics are unacceptable.

"We all need to be thinking of not only ourselves but everybody's health and safety. If we see an unsafe act we should raise it up and not just turn a blind eye and keep walking."

HSE's advice to the trade:

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2. Based in Shropshire, [Classic Motor Cars](#) provide customers with a range of services from full nut and bolt restorations to storage. The company workshops cover over 40,000 sq. ft, with highly trained team members, all keen to provide their expert assistance. From spare parts and routine servicing to full restorations, the company has been trusted with the country's most prestigious vehicles.