

DCM vapour killed a construction worker

A brick and stonework restoration company, Brick Restoration Ltd and its two directors, Stewart Bailey and John McCole, have been sentenced following the death of a construction worker.

Alexandru Sorin was overcome by dichloromethane ('DCM') vapour whilst using a DCM-based paint stripper at a property in London on 25 July 2017.

Mr Sorin was working on his own stripping paint from the walls of a lightwell in the basement of Berkeley Gardens, London. DCM vapour is heavier than air and can accumulate in confined spaces with poor ventilation. While carrying out the work Mr Sorin was overcome by the DCM vapour and died from the exposure.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Brick Restoration Ltd failed to implement any effective measures to control Mr Sorin's exposure to DCM. His death could have been prevented by eliminating the risk associated with DCM by using a different removal method or by substituting the DCM paint remover for a less hazardous product.

At City of London Magistrates' Court, Brick Restoration Ltd of Worboys Road, Worcester, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 7(1) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and were fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64.

Stewart Bailey of Worboys Road, Worcestershire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64.

John McCole of Savill Gardens, London also pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector, Owen Rowley, said: 'Mr Sorin's death was entirely avoidable. DCM is a volatile solvent and exposure to high concentrations of vapour can cause loss of consciousness and death.

"Anyone intending work with DCM-based products should carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and implement appropriate control measures. Crucially, DCM-based products should only be used in well ventilated areas to prevent the build-up of vapour."

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. www.hse.gov.uk

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Further guidance on working safely can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/dcm2.pdf>

[Retailer and electrical contracting company fined after electrician sustains serious burns in warehouse explosion](#)

A retail company and an electrical contracting company have been fined after an electrician suffered serious burns to 15 per cent of his body when he was caught in an explosion at a warehouse in Liverpool.

On 22 September 2018, an electrician was using a metal spanner to repair an electrical fault at B&M Retail Ltd warehouse, in Speke. The spanner he was using came into contact with a live busbar (metallic strip) linked to the power distribution causing an electrical explosion.

The 35-year-old electrician sustained serious injuries which included burns to his arms, hands, thighs, legs, and face. He was placed in an induced coma for two weeks and had to undergo several skin grafts. As a result of the incident the electrician was unable to work for five months.

The victim said: "I am very conscious of the scars and always think people are staring at me or talking about me behind my back.

"To me, my arms look like Freddy Kruger's from Nightmare on Elm Street.

"I now can't play with my little boys as much as I used to and I'm worried about hurting myself, and they are worried about hurting me. I have paranoia of being touched.

"I do worry about the future as I know the pain will never go away and might get worse, leaving me unable to work and support my family."

A HSE investigation found that the victim, who was employed by Daker Ltd, had been attempting to connect a generator to B&M's Low Voltage supply in order to allow B&M to operate some of its core site functions whilst high voltage maintenance was being undertaken. This work was complex involving several contractors and required co-ordination of different working parties with

specific time limited requirements. There was insufficient planning between parties beforehand including who was in charge of each site, coordination of work and exchange of relevant documentation.

B&M failed to appoint a suitably competent person to plan and carry out the work to connect temporary generators to their distribution board at the premises

Electrical contractors Daker Ltd.'s work methods fell well below the required standards. Electrical work commenced without proper planning. The power supply to the circuit was not stopped prior to the incident and live working was allowed to take place, this meant that the power supply could be switched on or off at any point, putting workers at risk of electric shock.

B&M Retail Ltd of The Vault, Dakota Drive, Estuary Commerce Park, Speke, Liverpool pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) and Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. At Liverpool Crown Court, the company was fined £1,000,000 and ordered to pay costs of ££4,978 .

Daker Ltd of Stewart House of Tonge Moor Road, Bolton pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £100

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Roger Clarke said: "This incident has had life-changing consequences on the victim and his family.

"It could have been avoided if the companies involved had taken the time to appropriately plan and coordinate tasks to ensure the circuit was dead, eliminating the risk of electrocution to workers.

"Working with electricity is a high-risk activity and safety must be a priority."

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

[The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Guidance on Regulations \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

[Electricity at work: Safe working practices HSG85 \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

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

Kingstanding house gas explosion: Stay safe with a gas safety check

Getting a gas safety check is the best way to protect your property.

That's the message to people in Kingstanding who might be concerned after a gas explosion destroyed a house in the Birmingham neighbourhood last month. A woman died and a man was seriously injured in the incident.

Gas incidents such as the Kingstanding explosion are devastating but extremely rare. HSE's statistics show there were 25 gas related fire and explosion incidents in 2020/2021. This is despite there being over 22 million households using gas across the country.

The authorities recommend some simple steps people can take to keep their homes safe.

Gas appliances should be regularly checked to prevent gas leaks and stop carbon monoxide being released. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says homeowners should get an annual gas safety check carried out by a qualified engineer listed on the Gas Safe Register.

Anyone living in rented accommodation should check their landlord has had an annual gas safety record check carried out by a registered Gas Safe engineer.

The Gas Safe Register is the official list of gas businesses which are registered to work safely and legally on boilers, cookers, fires, and all other gas appliances. By law, anyone working with gas in domestic or commercial premises must be listed on the register. Gas Safe registered businesses can be found on their [website](#).

Meanwhile, everyone should find where in their property the gas emergency control valve (also called gas emergency shut off valve) is. This will be found at their gas meter. Householders should check they have access to it. If they ever smell gas, call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999.

In some circumstances, suppliers can offer free gas safety checks through the Priority Services Register. For further advice and information homeowners can contact their gas supplier (the company they pay their bills to).

John Rowe, HSE policy lead for gas safety, said: "Our thoughts are with those affected by the terrible Kingstanding incident. When something so devastating happens, people understandably worry.

"The truth is gas is an incredibly safe way of fuelling our homes. Serious incidents are extremely rare. We should all be careful and not unduly concerned about using gas in our home. We're encouraging householders to get a gas safety check, carried out by a registered Gas Safe engineer. Everyone should know where their emergency gas safety valve is and that it is

accessible. These steps will help keep people safe.”

Bob Kerr, Gas Services Director at Gas Safe Register, said: “Regular safety checking and servicing of gas appliances can ensure that they are operating safely and as intended. Having an audible carbon monoxide alarm is also a good second line of defence.”

Alex Shapland, Area Commander with West Midlands Fire Service, said: “Our thoughts remain with everyone affected by the devastating incident in Kingstanding; in particular those who grieve and the man who was injured.

“The events of 26 June are a stark reminder of how important it is to get gas appliances regularly tested by a Gas Safe professional.

“We would also urge anyone who’s concerned about fire safety at home to contact their local fire and rescue service. Our own ‘Safe and Well’ visits can be requested via our website, wmfs.net, and by calling 0800 389 5525.”

Further information:

For more information on gas health and safety visit HSE’s [website](#).

You can find out more at [Check Your Gas Appliances – Gas Safe Register](#)

Tips to keep gas safe:

1. Only use a Gas Safe registered engineer to fit, fix and service your appliances. You can find and check an engineer at GasSafeRegister.co.uk or call 0800 408 5500.
1. Know the six signs of carbon monoxide poisoning – headaches, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, collapse and loss of consciousness.
1. Check gas appliances for warning signs that they are not working properly - for example lazy yellow flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks or stains on or around the appliance and condensation in the room.
1. Fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm. This will alert you if there is carbon monoxide in your home.
1. If you smell gas call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999.
1. Check both sides of your engineer’s Gas Safe Register ID card. Make sure they are qualified for the work you need doing. You can find this information on the back of the card.
1. Have all your gas appliances regularly serviced and safety checked every year. If you rent your home, ask for a copy of the landlord’s current Gas Safety Record.

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[HSE investigating fatal incident in Scunthorpe](#)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is investigating the death of a 27-year-old worker at a steelworks in Scunthorpe.

The incident happened on Saturday 16 July at a business premises on Brigg Road, Scunthorpe.

Emergency services responded to reports of a fall from height. The worker was sadly pronounced dead at the scene.

After initial enquiries were made by HSE and Humberside Police, it was established that HSE will lead the investigation into the circumstances of the incident.

HSE principal inspector Jane Fox said: "Our thoughts are with the family of the person who died.

"We are determined to understand the full facts of what happened on Saturday. Doing so may take time, but we will remain in close contact with the family."

About HSE

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Fatal injuries in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing in Great Britain report published

The number of people killed in agriculture-related activities in the last 12 months has fallen from its high level in 2021, but the rate of fatal injuries in the sector remains the highest of all major industries.

Provisional figures for 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 show 25 people were killed in agriculture-related activities, 22 workers and three members of the public.

The total of 25 is 16 fewer than the previous year and seven fewer than the five-year average. The oldest farmer killed in the most recent year was 85, the youngest person killed was a nine-year-old child.

Although, the number of fatal injuries to workers in the agricultural sector has fallen by around half since the early 1980s, the rate of fatalities, which is based on the number of people at work in the sector, has remained high. The worker fatal injury rate is 21 times higher than the average five-year annual rate across all industries.

The most common causes of death in agriculture have not changed for many years. This year is no different. The 5 most common causes of work-related death in agriculture are:

- Being struck by a moving vehicle
- Being struck by an object, such as bales
- Coming into contact with machinery, during operation or maintenance
- Falling from height
- Being crushed or trampled by animals, usually cattle.

Older workers, those aged 65 and older, accounted for more than a third of all worker fatalities.

Publication of the report (click [here](#)) coincides with the start of Farm Safety Week, which begins today (Monday 18 July) and runs until Friday.

Sue Thompson, Head of Agriculture, Health & Safety Executive, said: "Farming families are left devastated every year when their loved ones are killed.

"The numbers of fatalities this year is lower than last, and we are starting to see improvements in some areas, but the pace of change is slow, and the rate of workplace fatal injury in agriculture remains the highest of any sector.

"Agriculture is a vital part of our economy, and everyone involved is rightly proud of the quality and standard of the food produced.

“But it is not acceptable that agriculture continues to fail to manage risk in the workplace. We need everyone to play their part to improve the culture and modify the poor behaviours we see far too frequently. I encourage everyone to do things the right way and have the courage to ‘call out’ poor practices whenever they are seen.

“Agriculture will continue to be a priority sector for HSE. We are committed to making workplaces safer and holding employers to account for their actions, as part of our mission to protect people and places.

“Awareness of the hazards and risk have never been higher, and Farm Safety Week has played its part in this.

“But it’s regrettable that we’re not yet seeing the widespread changes in attitude towards safety, and the improvements in behaviour that will reduce the numbers of people injured or killed.

“Everyone in agriculture has a role to play in making the changes we all want to see. Together, we can make farming safer.”

The full report and more information on working safely in agriculture is available on the HSE website.

Farm Safety Week, which shines a light on safety in the sector, is led by the Farm Safety Foundation.

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2. The report highlights trends and provides summaries of each fatality involving employees, the self-employed and members of the public. The full report along with summaries of the circumstances of the individual fatal injuries can be read at [Fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain: 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 poster \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
3. Farm Safety Week is an initiative led by the Farm Safety Foundation and supported by the Farm Safety Partnerships, The Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and the Health & Safety Authority, Ireland.
4. HSE continues to work with stakeholders across the farming and forestry sector to keep up the pressure to manage risk in the workplace to reduce the likelihood of serious injury, ill health and death.
5. For information on how to stay healthy and safe in agriculture see HSE guidance [What a good farm looks like – Agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](#) and [Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)