

Health and Safety Executive Chief Executive awarded in the New Year's Honours List

The Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Sarah Albon has been recognised in the New Year's honours list.

Sarah has been appointed a Companion of the Order of Bath for her services to the public sector.

The honours are given by the King and recognise achievements of people from across the United Kingdom.

Sarah Albon said: "It is a great privilege to have been awarded a CB in the King's New Year's Honours list.



HSE CEO Sarah Albon

"I'm proud to be a civil servant working on behalf of the public, and proud of the teams I lead. I have been very fortunate to work with dedicated and talented colleagues throughout my career and I see this award as testament to their achievements as much as my own."

Chair of the HSE Board Sarah Newton added: “It’s a pleasure to work with Sarah Albon who over the past five years at HSE has led the organisation through significant challenges and change.

“Since becoming Chief Executive of HSE in 2019, Sarah has provided outstanding leadership, implementing major initiatives of national significance, protecting people and places. I’m pleased to see this award rightly recognise Sarah’s contribution, both here at HSE and in her roles across the Civil Service, and I am delighted to congratulate her on this achievement.”

Sarah joined HSE in 2019 and led the organisation’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to HSE, Sarah was Chief Executive of the Insolvency Service. Before that, she worked for the Ministry of Justice and its predecessor departments.

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.

[Company fined as worker breaks leg from fall](#)

A company has been fined £120,000 after an employee broke his leg while working on a property in Salisbury.

The man, who was 23 at the time, fell from the roof of the house on Sherfield English Road while working for EE Renewables Limited on 16 December 2022.

He had been adjusting a solar panel when he slid and fell four metres onto the ground below, sustaining a broken femur as a result.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found EE Renewables Limited had not properly planned the work at height and failed to take suitable steps to prevent a fall. The company had been hired by the homeowner to move nine solar panels higher up on the roof.



The company had been hired to move solar panels on the homeowner's roof

HSE guidance can be found at: [Work at height – HSE](#)

EE Renewables Limited, of Salterns Lane, Fareham, Hampshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay £4,716 in costs at Swindon Magistrates' Court on 23 December 2024.

HSE inspector Sam Applebee said: "EE Renewables Limited did not properly plan this work so it could be carried out in a safe manner. There were inadequate means of protecting the workers from falling off the roof, with the company failing to provide edge protection.



The worker fell four metres onto the ground below

“Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of injuries and fatalities in Britain, so it is important that companies ensure they implement the correct control measures and safe working practices.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Karen Park and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Withell.

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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](#).
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[Update on investigation into Birmingham fairground incident](#)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) continues to investigate an incident involving a fairground ride in Birmingham City Centre.

Twelve people were injured as a result of the incident on the evening of 12 December 2024. Two people were taken to hospital and discharged shortly after with minor injuries.

The ride involved in this incident will remain in situ to preserve the scene while the criminal HSE investigation continues.

HSE Principal inspector Matthew Whitaker said: “We appreciate this incident has affected many people during the festive period. We are thoroughly investigating to establish whether there have been any breaches of health and safety law.

“Once our investigation is complete, a decision will then be made on what further action will be taken.”

West Midlands Police has released two men on bail pending further enquiries.

Anyone with CCTV or mobile phone footage, which may assist the investigation, has been asked to get in touch with West Midlands Police quoting log 4290 of 12 December.

Further information:

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1. The other rides which are currently inside the cordon are being checked by Birmingham City Council. Once those checks have been done, the cordon will reduce to cover the StarFlyer only which will remain in situ to preserve the scene.

1. More information on the HSE's [Enforcement Policy Statement](#) is available.

[Food manufacturer fined following machinery incidents](#)

A food manufacturer has been fined more than half a million pounds after three of its employees suffered serious injuries in separate incidents involving machinery.

David Wood Baking Ltd has been prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The incidents took place at between June and December 2022:

- On 25 June 2022, a woman's arm was drawn into a conveyor belt at the company's site at Lyon Road in Kearsley, Bolton. As a result, she suffered two open fractures and permanent nerve damage in the hand. She underwent three operations and the insertion of two metal plates to repair the damage.
- On 20 July 2022, a man working at the company's site in Sidney Street, Bolton, was injured after becoming trapped in a mechanical mixer. He was attempting a repair to the machine when the lid of the mixer dropped onto his left arm. Neither the supervisor or manager on call were contactable and the employee was stuck in the machine for around 90 minutes, eventually being freed by the fire brigade. The man suffered an open fracture to the arm as well as other fractures and nerve damage in the left forearm.
- On 4 December 2022, also at the Kearsley site, a woman had a finger severed after her hand became entangled in an unguarded drive belt on a machine that she was operating. She was also left with ongoing nerve damage to the hand.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard that the company had a history of poor machinery guarding practice, having previously been convicted and fined £858,000 following an incident in 2021, where a 26-year-old employee had to have his right arm surgically removed following an incident with a piece of machinery.

The HSE investigation into the 2022 incidents found the company failed to keep employees safe from risks posed by food manufacturing machinery, and that training was inadequate and monitoring insufficient to rectify issues.

The risk of injury is higher when machinery becomes unreliable and develops faults, or it is used improperly through inexperience or lack of training. HSE guidance is available [here](#).

David Wood Baking Limited of Calverley Road, Oulton, Leeds, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment

Regulations 1998. The company was fined £573,344 and was ordered to pay £12,288 costs at a hearing on 19 December 2024 at Manchester Magistrates' Court.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Jennifer French said:

"This company failed to keep employees safe from risks posed by food manufacturing machinery. The training was inadequate and the monitoring insufficient to rectify issues.

"It is important for industries to understand the potential dangers arising from the use of, or working near, dangerous machinery.

"HSE will always be prepared to use appropriate enforcement when companies fall short of their duties and responsibilities."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Iain Jordan.

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[School Academy Trust fined £300,000 after student death](#)

A school academy trust has been fined £300,000 after a 19-year-old student died as a result of a 'series of management failures'.

Owen Garnett, who was described by his family as having "an incredible sense of humour" and who had "everything to live for" died two days after choking on a paper towel at Welcombe Hills School in Stratford-upon-Avon on 9 January 2023.

The teenager was a Sixth Form student at the school, which is for children with special educational needs and part of the Unity Multi Academy Trust (MAT). He had been diagnosed with Pica – a potentially life-threatening eating disorder where sufferers have a compulsion to eat things which have no

nutritional value. He had been a student at the school since the age of 11. Despite a near miss incident just days earlier, the school failed to take action to make sure it didn't happen again.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that none of the staff in Owen's class team had received any specific training on the management of safety risks associated with Pica.



Owen Garnett died two days after choking on a paper towel at his school

Before she died, Owen's grandmother Maureen Garnett provided a statement alongside her husband Cliff.

"After Owen had passed away we never slept, we never ate, all we could do was cry," they said.

"This lasted for months.

"This was supposed to be a place where Owen was safe and secure and happy.

"Owen had Pica and should have been kept under close supervision at all times and I can't understand why this didn't happen.

"We would describe Owen as a unique, lovable, challenging and caring and happy child.

"He will never be forgotten and our family will never get over this."

The HSE investigation also found that students at the school have individual risk assessments which detail any specific health and safety risks, which relate to them, and the control measures that need to be in place at to protect against that risk. The risk of choking associated with Pica was identified on Owen's risk assessment and a "named person" was supposed to supervise him to make sure he did not eat anything that could cause him harm.

On 9 January 2023, Owen was out in the playground area with other students during a break from class, unsupervised, and found his way back into school.

It took several minutes for his absence to be noticed and when he was found, it was around the side of the building, and he was choking. Emergency services were called, and although they retrieved a ball of paper towel from his throat, he had been without oxygen too long and later died in hospital. Days before, there had been a similar incident with Owen, where he was seen in the playground by a teacher, again choking on blue towel, but Owen managed to clear his airway on his own.

The school failed to ensure that all the safety risks associated with Pica hazards, such as, in Owen's case, the garden area, or supplies of paper towels, were correctly identified and that the preventive and protective measures including supervision, were organised in such a way as to protect him. They also failed to effectively investigate and respond to the concerns raised by his family.

His foster parents, Jacqueline and Graham Blackwell, said the day Owen died had started out as any other.

"Owen got up and had his breakfast," they said.

"I can still remember him waiting excitedly for his usual taxi driver to pick him. He gave me a cuddle and then left for school.

"Owen was part of our family, we had made so many adjustments and made so many plans so that he could remain with us indefinitely.

"We had been saving to take him to Florida to swim with dolphins, but this is something he will never get to do. We ended up having to use this money to cover the cost of Owen's funeral.

"His death has ruined every part of our lives.

"Owen had everything to live for and was such a character and used to love joking and playing about – he had an incredible sense of humour."

- [HSE guidance](#) states that when assessing the health and safety risks to individual students is necessary, educational employers should follow a risk management approach that focuses attention on the real risks; involving employees, students and carers in identifying the individual's needs and necessary precautions.

Unity MAT, c/o Woodlands School Packington Lane, Coleshill, Birmingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £300,000 and ordered to pay £10,750 in costs at Coventry Magistrates Court on 18 December 2024.

HSE inspector Rebecca Whiley said: "This tragic incident could have easily been avoided if Owen was being closely supervised, as he should have been.

"The near miss incident a few days before should have raised the alarm with the school and triggered an investigation into how Owen had been able to access the paper towel, and steps could have been taken to prevent it happening again.

“His death resulted from a series of management failures throughout Owen’s time at the Hub, and a failure by the school to act on the concerns raised by his family.

“Our thoughts today are with Owen’s family. He was a young man with a happy life ahead of him. He should have returned home safely to his family after a day at school, but because of the failings by Welcombe Hills School and Unity MAT, he did not.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and paralegal officer Sarah Thomas.

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5. HSE guidance on [supporting pupils with disabilities, special educational needs and additional support needs](#) is available.