

Company fined after worker's fingers sliced off

A vape liquid manufacturing company in Manchester has been fined after a worker lost two fingers and a thumb while clearing a blockage in a packaging machine.

The agency worker at VN Labs Ltd was operating a nicotine liquid pod packaging machine at the firm's premises on Beacon Road, Trafford Park, when it became blocked on 22 October 2020.

While removing the plastic that was causing the blockage, the machine's blade was freed and sliced the worker's right hand.

This led to the amputation of two of the worker's fingers (index and middle) and thumb on his right hand after it became apparent they could not be reattached.

The 43-year-old man, who lives in Manchester, has been unable to work since the incident, now struggles carrying out everyday tasks and has suffered from mental health difficulties as a result of his injuries.

He said in his victim personal statement: "The accident has had an impact on my daily activities because from day one until now I did not have a day without pain. My mind has completely changed. I can't do simple tasks such as prepare eggs for my children. I used to enjoy hobbies like judo, jujitsu and climbing.

"My mental health has suffered because of the accident and is not regular like it was before, there is a lot of instability. I have good days and bad days. My financial situation has deteriorated and I feel like I have no control over anything. I can't work and I have to delay all my bills including my rent. It was never like this before."

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the machine had recently been imported without any guarding. The engineering team at VN Labs assessed the machine and installed a see-through plastic guard over the top. Despite this, access to dangerous parts of the machine was still possible. There was also no formal written risk assessment for the blister pack machines. The company also failed to implement a safe system for clearing blockages and did not effectively supervise and monitor its working processes.



The packaging machine at VN Labs Ltd



The packaging machine at VN Labs Ltd

HSE guidance can be found at: [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/puwer/)

VN Labs Limited, of Beacon Road, Trafford Park, Manchester, pleaded guilty to breaches of Section 2 (1) and 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £180,000 and ordered to pay £7,490.05 in costs at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 16 June 2023.

HSE inspector Joseph Wright said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks and put in safe system of works for the operation of all machinery.

"Companies should recognise the need to ensure machinery is guarded to the standard of UK legislation even when imported from another country because they may have different laws around the standard of guarding."

Notes to Editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](https://www.hse.gov.uk/) (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.

[Aircraft seat manufacturer fined £660k after worker fell through roof](#)

A leading manufacturer of aircraft seats has been fined £660,000 after one of its employees suffered horrific injuries when he fell through a roof at a site in South Wales.

Safran Seats GB Limited was carrying out work to vacate its premises in Llantarnum Industrial Park in Cwmbran when the incident happened on 19 May 2020.

Kevin Lewis, who was 62 at the time, suffered multiple broken bones, including eight to his ribs, his collar bone, as well as a fractured skull. He had been dismantling and removing a spraying booth when he fell more than seven feet through its roof.



The incident happened at a Safran Seats site in Cwmbran

Mr Lewis was knocked unconscious as he hit the concrete floor and suffered a bleed on the brain.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found inadequate planning of the work at height meant suitable equipment wasn't used and insufficient instruction and training had been given to those carrying out the work.

In the five-year period between 2017 and 2022, 174 workers in Great Britain – a quarter of those killed in accidents at work – tragically fell to their death. HSE guidance can be found at: [Work at height – HSE](#).

Safran Seats GB Limited pleaded guilty at Cwmbran Magistrates Court on June 14 2023 to breaching section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and fined £660,000. They must also pay costs of £13,472.

HSE Inspector Seren Linton said: “Those in control of any work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working.

“They should also provide the necessary information, instruction, and training to their workers on the safe system of working.

“If these basic practices had been followed, this incident would have been entirely preventable.”

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

4. Advise on [preventing falls while working at height](#) is available.

[Serious failings found at hand car wash firms across South East](#)

Serious health and safety breaches were found by inspectors at 20 hand car wash businesses in West Sussex and Kent.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspected hand car washes around the counties as part of an inspection campaign. In Mid Sussex and Crawley, they found failings at each site they visited and failings were found at half the sites visited in Kent.



- Electrical faults such as damaged cabling is a common issue

Faulty sockets, damaged cabling, and defective equipment were just some of the common issues HSE inspectors found.

HSE says businesses are failing to protect their staff and customers as a new wave of inspections begins this week (w/c 19 June 2023).

The two-day inspection campaign ran in May and was in response to persistent safety problems with hand car wash businesses across the country. It follows the recent prosecution by HSE of a [car valeting company in the North East of England](#). The inspection campaign will now move on to East Sussex and Surrey.

The majority of issues identified related to [electrical safety](#) such as faulty sockets, damaged cabling, and defective electrical equipment. Inspectors also found some businesses didn't have [Employers Liability \(Compulsory\) Insurance](#)

in place while others lacked [basic toilet and other staff welfare facilities](#).



- Serious failings such as faulty sockets were found at hand car wash businesses across the South East

Principal Inspector Emma Stiles, who is leading the campaign, said that the results reinforced HSE's concerns about basic safety in the industry.

"Hand car washes have been identified as an area of concern for some time," she said.

"The fact basic safety issues were found at the majority of the premises we have visited so far have borne this out.

"A number of Prohibition Notices have been served meaning that there was an immediate serious risk of injury to staff and members of the public.

"Faulty electrical sockets and wiring are putting workers and the public at risk of serious injury from contact with electricity.

"Business owners need to understand the implications of cutting corners around safety."

The HSE campaign will now target other areas, including East Sussex (from Lewes to Bexhill-on-Sea) and Surrey (Elmbridge and Runnymede). These inspections will be carried out from June 19.

HSE is asking the public to be vigilant when using car washes and to report any issues to the regulator.

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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 guidance on [electrical safety and maintenance](#), [employers' liability insurance](#) and the [provision of welfare facilities](#) is available.

[Council fined for waste collection failures](#)

- Investigation prompted by death of employee Steve Bishop

Chelmsford City Council has been fined £80,000 for waste collection safety failures, after a father-of-three died when he was struck by a bin lorry.

Steve Bishop, 37, passed away after being hit by the rear and underside of a bin lorry that was reversing down Osea Way, Chelmsford, on 8 December 2017.

Steve, who lived in Chelmsford, was working as a loader operative for Chelmsford City Council at the time of the incident.

Nickie Bishop, Steve's partner, says her family will never get over his passing.

It is accepted the Council's failings did not lead to the death of Mr Bishop. The incident did however, prompt a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation. The workplace regulator found that Chelmsford City Council failed to effectively manage the risks presented by moving refuse vehicles, provide training and instruction for agency workers on safe procedures for reversing and the use of hand signals. The local authority also failed to effectively monitor its employees working practices.



HSE guidance can be found at: [Collecting waste and recyclables \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/collecting-waste-and-recyclables)

Nickie Bishop said: “I would like to reiterate the pain this has caused me and my boys. My boys’ dad will never be brought back from this tragic incident. Me and my sons shall never get over this.

“I hope more than anything that no other family ever has to go through this heartbreak, to have a knock on the door to say their partner who is hard at work and been run over.

“For me now, as my 11-year-old and nine-year-old bring up fond memories of their dad and family moments, I am having the difficult subject of my youngest son, who is five, asking about his dad, and why he is in the sky.”

Chelmsford City Council pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The local authority was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £61,065 in costs at Chelmsford Crown Court on 16 June 2023.

HSE inspector Saffron Turnell said: “Several health and safety management failings were identified by this public organisation which led to inconsistent systems of work and provision of training in the high-risk activity of waste collection. Nickie’s words make clear the impact Steve’s passing has had on the family and our thoughts remain with them.

“Local authorities and companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to hold to account those that fall below the required standards.”

This prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Rebecca Schwartz.

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE works alongside the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum who produces the industry guidance reversing in Waste Recycling Collections INFO-12.pdf (wishforum.org.uk)
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
5. Pictures of the bin lorry attached.

[Working in hot weather: Employers asked to help workers](#)

Employers need to act to make sure their workers are protected during periods of extreme hot weather this summer.

That's the message from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – the country's workplace regulator.

The UK Health Security Agency and the Met Office have issued a yellow heat-health alert for the coming days (Friday June 9 through to Monday June 12). The alert is the first to be issued in 2023.

HSE says this alert – and the record high temperatures seen in Great Britain last summer – should prompt employers to take action to protect those working both inside and outside in extreme heat.

There is no legal maximum temperature for workplaces but the regulator is calling on employers to be responsible.

HSE saw a surge in people seeking advice during summer 2022 – with visits to its online hot weather working guidance increasing by nearly a thousand percent and the number of concerns relating to hot weather reported to HSE almost doubling in July, when temperatures exceeded 40°C for the first time in history.

Employers must assess risks to the health and safety of their workers by law, including risks from extreme weather such as heat waves. While there is no legal maximum temperature for workplaces, heat is classed as a hazard and should be treated like other hazards.

HSE says everyone – whether working indoors or outdoors – is at risk and employers should discuss with workers changes to manage the risk.

HSE is asking employers to consider simple and cheap measures such as:

- Making sure workplace windows can be opened or closed to prevent hot air from circulating or building up.
- Using blinds or reflective film on workplace windows to shade workers from the sun.
- Placing workstations away from direct sunlight and heat sources.
- Putting insulation around hot pipes and machinery.
- Offering flexible working patterns so workers can work at cooler times of the day.
- Provide free access to drinking water.
- Relaxing dress codes if possible.
- Providing weather-appropriate [personal protective equipment](#)
- Encouraging workers to remove [personal protective equipment](#) when resting (ideally in shaded areas) to cool off.
- Sharing information about the symptoms of heat stress and what to do if someone is affected.

Many firms are already taking steps to adapt to Great Britain's changing climate. Nottingham-based engineering firm CNTL Ltd found that measures as simple as changing the lightbulbs helped workers.

Dane Rawson, Director of CNTL Ltd, said: "The heat was getting unbearable so we brought everyone together to agree what we could do. We moved to flexible hours to suit staff. Some went with 5am to 1pm. We also replaced our lightbulbs to LEDs, which give off a lot less heat. Longer-term we're starting to think about work we can get done on the roof so it absorbs less heat."

John Rowe, HSE's Head of Operational Strategy, said: "Last summer should have been a wakeup call for all employers. Climate change means we're likely to get hotter summers and that could have a big impact on the workforce of this country, affecting everything from health of workers to productivity on construction sites.

"We know all employers are under pressure and we don't want to add to their burden but it's vital they think hard now about simple and cheap measures they can put in place to support workers should we see extreme heat again this summer.

"The extreme heat we experienced in 2022 isn't going away so sensible, supportive employers will be planning now how they should respond."

Ends

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

3. HSE guidance can be found at: [Temperature \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/)