

Lincolnshire food manufacturer fined after employee crushed in cooking machine

A Lincolnshire-based food manufacturer has been fined after one of its employees sustained two broken ribs having been crushed within an industrial cooking machine whilst working to clear a blocked water inlet.

Lincoln Magistrates' Court heard how the employee was crushed in the machine after its safety systems were over-ridden and the machine worked on whilst it was live. It should have been isolated before work on it began.

An investigation carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the task was carried out by the employees in this fashion on a regular basis and that the company should have been aware. No risk assessment of the task had been completed and employees had not been provided with a safe system of work to carry it out. The lack of a safe system of work for the task and the company's failure to monitor how the work was done, led employees to devise their own way of conducting the procedure which included over-riding the safety systems and using unsafe working practices.

Bakkavor Fresh Cook Ltd of Sluice Road, Holbeach St Marks Spalding pleaded guilty of one breach of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and were fined £130,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2607.10.

At the end of the trial HSE inspector Tim Nicholson commented: "Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers. If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to this incident, alongside good monitoring of the way the work was done, the injuries sustained by the employee could have been prevented."

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. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk
3. Information regarding how to safely carry out maintenance tasks can be found on the HSE website at hse.gov.uk/safemaintenance
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>