

Man left permanently disabled after being crushed by tonne of glass

A company must pay more than £100k after one of its employees was left with life-changing injuries when a pallet of glass weighing more than one tonne fell on top of him.

Andrew Potts, from Nottingham, was left permanently disabled and reliant on a cocktail of medication after breaking his neck in five places following the incident at a depot in Lichfield on 30 September 2016.

The pallet had shifted during transportation and fell on to the 58-year-old, who has not been able to work since with his wife Dawn having to give up her own job to become his full-time carer.



The pallet of glass – weighing more than one tonne – fell out of the lorry and on top of Mr Potts

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that United Pallet Network (UK) Limited's (UPN) system of working was inadequate and not communicated with staff. They also failed to provide adequate training in [how to recover shifted loads](#).

“This has been extremely hard to deal with, emotionally, physically and financially,” Mr Potts said.

“I had to stay in Royal Stoke University Hospital for nine days following the incident.

“Dawn used to come home crying, wondering whether I would make it, and how she and the family would cope.

“I have been left physically, partially disabled.

“I am having to adjust to this new way of being as I continue to struggle to accept what has happened.

“I had recurring nightmares following the incident – I would wake up screaming, sweating or crying.

“The incident left me severely depressed.”



The pallet of glass – weighing more than one tonne – fell out of the lorry and on top of Mr Potts

As well as the multiple neck fractures, which resulted in a halo being screwed into his head for several weeks, Mr Potts also suffered many other injuries including broken bones in his leg and feet. Those injuries resulted in eleven pins being inserted into one of his feet, three of which will remain for the rest of his life.

“I can’t walk very far at all, I use walking poles in an attempt to keep me as upright as possible to walk outside of our home,” he said.

“Depending on where we are actually going, like shopping for instance, I use a powerchair to enable me to get around, even so, all these physical tasks are simply exhausting.

“Our lives will never be the same again, the accident was absolutely life changing.

“We are learning to live again and adjusting to enjoy a different kind of life, because life is a gift.”

Stafford Crown Court heard how on the evening of 30 September 2016, a lorry containing a consignment of four pallets of glass arrived at United Pallet Network (UK) Limited’s (UPN) pallet hub at Fradley Park, Lichfield. The pallets had not been appropriately loaded or secured and fell out of the trailer onto Mr Potts as he made attempts to rectify the problem.



The pallet of glass had shifted from its loaded position during its transportation

United Pallet Network (UK) Ltd of Vantage Business Park, Leicester pleaded guilty to Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and it was fined £94,667 and ordered to pay costs of £7,590.34.

HSE Inspector Andrew Johnson said after the hearing: "This is yet another tragic, and avoidable workplace incident that should never have happened.

"Had UPN devised and trained its employees in suitably safe systems of work to deal with shifted loads, then Mr Potts would have continued living the life he had before this incident.

"This is why it is crucial that transport companies get their trailer loading and unloading systems right."

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