

Manufacturer fined after two killed by spray-booth explosion

A Norwich manufacturing firm has been fined after two employees working with flammable substances in a spray booth were killed by an explosion.

Norwich Crown Court heard how, on 13 July 2015, two workers had already sprayed several welded steel buckets that morning and were preparing for their next batch. The flammable vapour generated whilst cleaning or flushing a paint spray gun was ignited by one of the various sources of ignition which were present at the scene. An explosion occurred, killing both workers.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the immediate cause of the explosion to be the inconsistent and incomplete approach to health and safety by the company and its employees. This resulted in the lack of suitable control measures; specifically, a suitable and sufficient safe system of work for the activities in the spray booth.

Harford Attachments Limited of Spar Road, Norwich pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and breaching Regulation 6(4)(f)(i) of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations 2002 and has been fined £145,000 and ordered to pay costs of £65,900.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Keith Waller said: "This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of the company to implement safe systems of work, and failure to ensure that health and safety documentation was communicated and followed.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.