

Orkney company fined after employee fell through fragile roof

A cheese company has been fined £8,000 after an employee was seriously injured when he fell through a fragile roof.

Kirkwall Sheriff Court heard how, on 30 October 2017, an employee of Orkney Cheese Company Limited was asked by the general manager to retrieve a dead mouse from an unfloored loft area. After doing this by crawling along ceiling joists, he then placed his foot on a fragile board which had been left behind when the factory was built. The board gave way and he fell approximately 2.5 metres to the reception below.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Orkney Cheese Company Limited ordinarily brought in external contractors to deal with vermin issues and that employees were not normally required to work at height within the business. The investigation found that, on this occasion, the employee fell through the suspended ceiling and suffered a significant injury because no control measures had been implemented to safely cross the unfloored loft.

Orkney Cheese Company Limited of Crowness Road, Kirkwall, Orkney pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4 of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and was fined £8,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Norman Schouten said:

“Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known. Working on or near fragile surfaces should be properly assessed and managed. “This case highlights the importance for companies to assess and control risks created by non-routine tasks.”

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.