

Plastic Coated Fabric Manufacturing company in Lancashire fined after machine incident

A Lancashire based manufacturer of plastic-coated fabrics has been fined after an employee's hand was drawn into an unguarded part of a machine, resulting in the surgical amputation of three fingers.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard that on 20 August 2019, a machine operator at the Earby site, was carrying out work activities on a large embossing machine, known as the Briem machine, when his hand became drawn into the nip point between two counter rotating rollers; referred to as the shell and the bole.

For product quality, the shell roller needed to be kept at an ice-cold temperature. This was achieved by using water cooled from a chiller unit, situated outside the building. Previous incidents leading up to the incident of the chiller "cutting out" had therefore made it custom and practice for the operators to check the temperature of the moving roller by hand. This resulted in the irreversible crush injuries to the operative's right hand.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that there was insufficient guarding to the machine with at least four exposed nip points and a heavy reliance on training rather than engineering controls, such as fixed guarding.

Following the incident, the company undertook remedial measures to ensure machinery safety, including suitable guarding to prevent access to dangerous parts of the machine.

The company Uniroyal Global Ltd, West Craven Drive, Earby, Barnoldswick, BB18 6JZ, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,462.75.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Leona Cameron commented: "A number of unsafe practices were uncovered.

"This included unguarded access to the dangerous parts of the Briem machine,

failings in maintenance and the quality of the risk assessment process in allowing an unsafe working practice to develop.

“For example, the company had identified the risk of entanglement from in-running nips, but had chosen not to take practicable measures to prevent such risk.

“If suitable guarding and robust maintenance procedures been in place, then the life changing injuries to the operative would not have occurred.”

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>
4. For more information and advice on working with machinery, please visit our website here: [Safety topics – Working with machinery \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://hse.gov.uk/safety-topics/working-with-machinery)

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