

# Sawmill company fined after worker fatally injured by machinery

A sawmill company has been fined after a worker was fatally injured when a lift conveyor collapsed on top of him.

Hereford Crown Court heard how on 20 December 2017, two employees were working below a lift conveyor at Pontrilas sawmill in Hereford to remove wood debris. The machine had been experiencing a fault, which had prevented the conveyor from descending. While the employees were working the conveyor suddenly dropped downwards causing fatal crush injuries to one employee and bruising and abrasion injuries to the head of the other employee.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that the company had failed to assess the risks to the employees during the cleaning operation or provide a suitable system of work for removing debris from beneath the raised lift conveyor.

Pontrilas Sawmills Limited of Hereford Road, Pontrilas, Hereford pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay costs of £22,016.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Lee Schilling said: "Unplanned maintenance activities give rise to the risk of fatal incidents.

"Simply securing the lift conveyor in a raised position to prevent the inadvertent downward movement or collapse would have prevented this incident."

## **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. [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)**
- 2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/)**
- 3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>**

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