

Sawmill firm sentenced after serious hand injury

A company has been sentenced after a worker was seriously injured when his hand came into contact with a rotating bandsaw blade.

Blackpool Magistrates' court heard how on 18 April 2019, the employee was working on a multi-head bandsaw machine at P Irving & Sons Ltd sawmill in Carnforth, when the pipes supplying cooling fluid to one of the six band-saw blades became blocked.

The machine had already been stopped several times that morning to replace damaged blades. An engineer was called to fix the issue and the employee assumed the problem had been rectified.

Rather than stopping the machine a further time, the employee pulled apart the base of the cabinet, creating a gap large enough to place his hand inside. Holding a torch to see what was causing the blockage, the employee put his hand inside the gap.

There was no interlock or sensor to this part of the housing to stop the machine, and the sensor to the top of the housing failed to activate, so the machine continued.

The rotating blade caught the back of the employee's right hand severing the tendons. He has undergone several operations since the incident and is still unable to bend his fingers and cannot grip, write or hold objects. He is awaiting further surgery.

A HSE investigation found there were insufficient measures in place to stop the blade rotating when the cabinet housing was opened. Measures to prevent access to the dangerous rotating blade, such as fixed and interlocked guarding, had not been taken so far as was practicable. This meant the cabinet housing could be opened with the blade still turning and ultimately led to an employee sustaining a significant injury.

P Irving & Sons Ltd of The Sawmills, Hutton Roof, Carnforth pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £60,000 and ordered to pay costs of £20,000.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Leona Cameron said: "The risk of serious injury to employees operating this machine had existed for some considerable time.

"This injury could have been easily prevented, if the risk had been identified.

"Employers should make sure they properly assess and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from dangerous parts of machinery."



Multi-head bandsaw at P
Irving & Son

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

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