

Sheetmetal fabrication company in court after worker's finger crushed

A company specialising in manufacturing canopies and ventilation ducting has been fined after an employee's hand was drawn into the rotating parts of a machine, resulting in serious injury.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how on 14 October 2019, an apprentice of R Briggs Sheetmetal Fabrication Ltd, was instructed by another apprentice and a trainee on how to operate a swaging machine. This consisted of two rotating wheels controlled by a foot pedal, used to put a groove around a ducting tube. After carrying this process out on approximately four pieces of tubing, the apprentice was left to proceed on their own, unsupervised. Whilst continuing the task a the fabric safety glove worn by the apprentice caught in the rotating wheels of the machine. On releasing the foot pedal, the wheels took a few seconds to stop, drawing the apprentice's hand between them. The employee suffered from a crushed fingertip and a fracture. As a result of the incident the worker was unable to work for two months.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had not performed a risk assessment for using the machine or implemented any safe systems of work including recognising that the gloves presented a drawing-in and entanglement hazard on that machine. They did not provide staff with adequate training or assess the additional risks presented by a young, inexperienced person working with machinery and being unaware of existing or potential risks.

R.Briggs Sheetmetal Fabrication Ltd of Bond Street, Colne, Lancashire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £13,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,682.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Leanne Ratcliffe said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks and put in safe system of works for the operation of all machinery. Companies should be aware of their responsibility to recognise the way in which their employees are working. Employers should also be aware of the use of gloves when operating machinery where there is a risk of entanglement."

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.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/122.htm

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