

Sheffield company fined £700,000 after worker killed

Chesterfield Special Cylinders Ltd was fined £700,000 today for safety breaches after a 64-year-old worker was fatally wounded by shrapnel ejected from testing equipment.

Sheffield Crown Court heard that on 10 June 2015, John Townsend was leak testing eight 1500 litre cylinders, by applying compressed air inside to create pressure, at the company's Sheffield site. Whilst in the process of venting the air through the test manifold, it catastrophically failed and fatally injured Mr Townsend.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that prior to installing the fittings, 1.5 litres of a mineral oil-based corrosion inhibitor had been placed into each of the cylinders. The incident occurred because the inhibitor contaminated the leak test manifold during venting of cylinders and was subjected to enough pressure inside the manifold to ignite and cause the test equipment to fail.

Chesterfield Special Cylinders Ltd of Meadowhall Road, Sheffield was found guilty of breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £700,000 with full costs of £169,498.82.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Eddy Tarn commented: "This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of the company to identify any additional risks that arise when work processes are adapted.

"Companies should accurately identify and control all potential hazards in the workplace and thereafter monitor performance through effective supervision."

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^[1]
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/^[2]
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>^[3]

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