

Steel fabrication company fined after steel cages fall onto employee

A steel fabrication company has been fined after steel cages fell onto a worker's leg, resulting in multiple fractures.

Chelmsford Magistrates' Court heard that, in November 2017, an employee of Lemon Groundwork Solutions Limited was using a gantry crane to lift a steel cage from a stack of cages at the company site in Wickford, Essex. These steel cages were free-standing on the floor, each weighing 1188kg, and were stacked between 2-4 cages high in an unstable pyramid formation, without chocks to support the load. When the employee used the gantry crane to lift the top cage from the stack, two cages at the bottom rolled onto his left foot and leg, fracturing his tibia and fibula bones. As a result, the worker had to undergo reconstructive surgery where metal rods, plates and pins were inserted into his leg.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that prior to the incident, Lemon Groundwork Solutions Limited had failed to implement a safe system of work for storing cages and had not provided their employees with sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to store and handle cages safely. The company had additionally failed to determine the maximum height that the cages could be stacked and suitable means to secure the cages to prevent movement and collapse. The task of stacking cages was also not adequately risk assessed.

Lemon Groundwork Solutions Limited of Russell Gardens, Wickford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £130,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5589.99.

Lemon Groundwork Solutions Limited had previously been served Improvement Notices by HSE regarding the safety of its lifting operations and the management of vehicles and pedestrians in its yard. In November 2018, the company was fined £100,000 for a breach of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, following an incident in 2016 in which an employee was struck by a bundle of steel rebar that fell off a forklift, causing multiple fractures to his leg.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Eleanor Kinman said: "This incident could easily have been prevented if the company had adopted safe control measures for storing and handling cages, and adequately supervised the task."

"Companies should be aware of the risks of handling metal stock, and that it should always be stored and stacked so it is not likely to move, fall and cause injury."

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>
4. Guidance on the handling of metal stock is available in HSG246 – Safety in the storage and handling of steel and other metal stock at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg246.htm>

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