

Tata Steel UK Ltd fined after worker suffers permanent brain damage

Tata Steel UK has been fined £120,000 after a worker suffered serious head injuries after being hit in the face with a scaffold pole, causing him to fall backwards.

Gavin Rowlands, an employee at Monolithic Refractories Limited, sustained permanent brain damage as a result of the incident on 3 April 2017.

He had been preparing to start a paddle mixer to mix concrete at Tata Steel UK's site in Port Talbot, Wales. The paddle mixer door however would not open as hard concrete had built around it.

Using a scaffold pole, one of Mr Rowland's colleagues managed to open the door. This caused the pole to spin and hit Mr Rowlands in the face with such force that he was thrown backwards, hitting his head and losing consciousness.

This led to Mr Rowlands breaking his jaw and suffering permanent brain damage.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found Tata Steel UK provided an unguarded mixer for Monolithic's employees to use and that the mixer's door regularly jammed. Tata Steel UK also failed to ensure that there was a safe system of work in place to release the mixer's door.

The investigation also found that as the mixer was unguarded, workers were able to develop and adopt an unsafe system of work to release the door, which ultimately resulted in Mr Rowlands injuries. Tata Steel UK also failed to supervise workers that were using the mixer at its site.

Tata Steel UK Limited, of Grosvenor Place, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay £14,138.06 in costs at Swansea Crown Court on 5 July 2023.

HSE inspector Gethyn Jones said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by implementing suitable control measures and safe working practices.

"Ensuring that safe systems of work are adopted and supplemented with adequate supervision to ensure they are followed is a fundamental requirement of the Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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.

2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Following a trial at Swansea Crown Court, Monolithic Refractories Limited was found not guilty to breaching Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.