

# Tissue manufacturer fined £1million after employee loses an eye

A Welsh company that manufactures kitchen and toilet tissue paper has been fined £1million after an employee was seriously injured when he was struck in the face by a crane hook.

On 5 November 2019, the man who worked for Sofidel UK Limited based in Neath, was attempting to free a paper reel, which had become stuck on the exit rails of a paper machine, by using an overhead crane.

During the operation, part of the crane contacted the spinning reel causing the crane hook to swing violently striking the man in the face. He suffered the loss of an eye, multiple fractures to the face and lost 9 teeth.

HSE has guidance about the [safe use of work equipment](#).

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Sofidel UK Limited, based at Brunel Way, Baglan Energy Park, Briton Ferry, Neath, failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to identify the hazards posed by paper reels which did not eject correctly from the machine. They also failed to ensure that control measures were in place and that employees were provided with information and instructions on what to do should this situation arise. The issue was happening regularly, yet no risk assessment had been undertaken despite operators being provided with basic equipment to use in these circumstances.

At Swansea Magistrates' Court on 13 July, Sofidel UK Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £1million and ordered to pay costs of £13,446.50.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Matthew Gray, said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by carrying out a suitable risk assessment which included non-routine operations such as clearing of blockages, and by implementing appropriate control measures and safe working practices.

"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.