

UPVC manufacturer fined after worker suffered life changing injuries

UPVC manufacturer Solarframe Limited was sentenced for safety breaches after a machine operative was crushed under falling materials.

Sheffield Magistrates' Court heard that on 19 July 2017, an agency worker was assisting the driver of a forklift truck (FLT) in cataloguing and sorting UPVC materials that were stored on long metal frames called 'stillages', which in turn were stacked on top of one another on top of a wheeled dolly. The FLT was being used to pull out the dollies and stacks and lift each individual stillage down so the contents could be inspected and tidied at the yard in Fields End Industrial Park, Rotherham.

The FLT driver began to restack the completed stillages onto a pile on the dolly, when the tips of the FLT forks protruded beyond the dolly and caught underneath the stillages stacked behind it. The stillages became unbalanced and fell on to a 56-year-old worker who was in the yard looking for materials.

He sustained a double broken pelvis, a broken and dislocated left arm, broken ribs left and right side, punctured lung, broken scapula, double broken clavicle, double fractured jaw, fractured cheekbone which involved the eye socket, and two trapped vertebrae in the back of his neck. He was kept in an induced coma for three weeks following the incident.

A HSE investigation found that the company had failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, which identified the risk of lifting equipment making contact with other items located nearby. The FLT in use was too large for the planned activity and the height of the stillages was too great, which presented a danger of them becoming unbalanced. Measures should also have been taken to segregate pedestrians from moving vehicles at the site.

Solarframe Limited of Davey Road, Fields End Industrial Park, Thurnscoe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,346.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Jane Fox said: “The worker’s injuries were life changing and he could have easily been killed. This serious incident could so easily have been avoided if basic safeguards had been put in place.

“Assessing the risks involved in work activities allows businesses to foresee what might occur. It is then straightforward to implement simple control measures and safe working practices.”

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