

Waste company fined after two workers injured in explosion

A Bedfordshire waste company has been sentenced after two of its employees suffered burns whilst processing flammable aerosol containers.

Luton Magistrates' Court heard how, on 12 July 2016, two workers were processing flammable aerosol canisters using an industrial plastic shredder. The canisters were highly pressurised and, while using a gas operated forklift to lift them into a shredder, a spark from the forklift ignited a cloud of gas created by the shredded aerosols, leading to an explosion. While both workers were injured, one suffered serious third degree burns which left him in an induced coma for 10 days, on a life support machine. The individual has undergone several operations and has been left with considerable permanent scarring and a lifelong dependency on medication for nerve pain.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the work was not suitably planned, not supervised by a competent person nor was it carried out in a safe manner.

B & W Waste Management Services Ltd of Thurleigh Road, Milton Earnest pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6 (1) of Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 and has been fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £11,603.14.

Speaking at the hearing, HSE inspector Andrew McGill said: "Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working.

"If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to the incident, the life changing injuries suffered by one employee, could have been prevented."

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>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.