

Wood panelling firm fined £400,000 after injured worker loses leg

A wood panel manufacturer has been fined £400,000 after a worker suffered life-changing injuries at its factory in Chirk, near Wrexham.

The incident happened at Kronospan Limited on 31 March 2021, when a pack of waste MDF sheets weighing around 350kg fell from a trailer and landed on the left leg of Mark Hughes from Johnstown.

The injuries sustained by Mr Hughes, now 53, were so serious they resulted in him having his left leg amputated below his knee. The loss of his leg has been life-changing and he has since had to move to an accessible house. He is no longer able to carry on with his hobbies and struggles to climb stairs.



Mark Hughes was seriously injured when a pack of waste MDF sheets fell from this lorry

“My injury has changed everything in my life, it is like somebody dropped a bomb on our life and never picked up the pieces,” he said.

“Everything now just takes a lot of planning to do and spontaneous trips do not happen anymore.

“I won’t go anywhere that has a lot of steps.”



The packs of MDF sheets weighed approximately 350kgs

After more than two years off work, Mr Hughes has been able to return to the company, but only in a part-time capacity.

“Some days I feel okay but some days after work I feel absolutely knackered.

“I’ve worked for Kronospan for 27 years and I feel since my accident it would be difficult to find a job somewhere else and start over,” he added.

“A lot of my social connection was from work because I used to work a lot of hours.

“I have a quality of life but it is a lot different than what it used to be.”



Kronospan Limited was fined £400,000 as a result of the incident

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Mr Hughes had loaded a flatbed trailer of waste MDF sheets to transport them across the site to be destroyed. When he began to take off the straps holding the sheets in place, a pack fell off the trailer and landed on top of him. The road across the site was poorly maintained and had lots of potholes.

The investigation also found that there was no suitable risk assessment or system of work in place specifically relating to the risks associated with the stacking, movement and loading of waste MDF sheets.

Kronospan Limited of Chirk, Wrexham pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £4,701 at Wrexham Magistrates Court on 19 November 2024.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Marie Wheeler said: “A man has suffered truly life-changing injuries as a result of this company’s failures.

“The incident was completely preventable had a proper risk assessment been carried out.

“Nor did the company have a suitable safe system of work in place.

“HSE will always take action when basic failures like these result in very serious injury.”

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
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. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences in England and Wales can be found [here](#) and for those in Scotland [here](#).