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HSE

Sheeted Tower Scaffold Collapsed Onto Members of the Public

Summary

A construction company and its sole director have been fined after an incorrectly assembled tower scaffold overturned on a busy London high street, striking and trapping two members of the public and causing serious injuries.

The scaffold had been covered with sheeting, which acted as a sail in windy conditions. The risks created by wind loading had not been adequately considered.

What Happened

On 19 July 2023, workers assembled a mobile tower scaffold on a busy high street in south-west London as part of a project to convert a commercial building into residential flats.

The tower had been assembled incorrectly and there were inadequate measures to separate the work from members of the public. It was subsequently covered with sheeting. In windy conditions, the sheeting acted as a sail, causing the scaffold to overturn. The structure fell onto two members of the public, trapping them and causing serious injuries.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to ensure the temporary structure was designed, installed and maintained so that it could withstand foreseeable loads, including wind acting on the sheeting.

The scaffold had not been assembled or inspected by adequately trained and competent people and had not been erected in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions or established industry guidance.

HSE also found that the company's sole director, who was acting as project manager and site supervisor, had been negligent. Despite the recognised risks associated with wind loading on scaffold structures, adequate account had not been taken of those risks before the decision was made to sheet the tower.

The company had previously been served with a Prohibition Notice relating to unsafe work involving a tower scaffold at another site.

The Outcome

The company was found guilty of breaching Regulation 19(2)(a) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. It was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £7,000 in costs.

The company's sole director was found guilty of an offence under Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. He was fined £1,730 and ordered to pay £1,730 in costs.

Key Learning Points

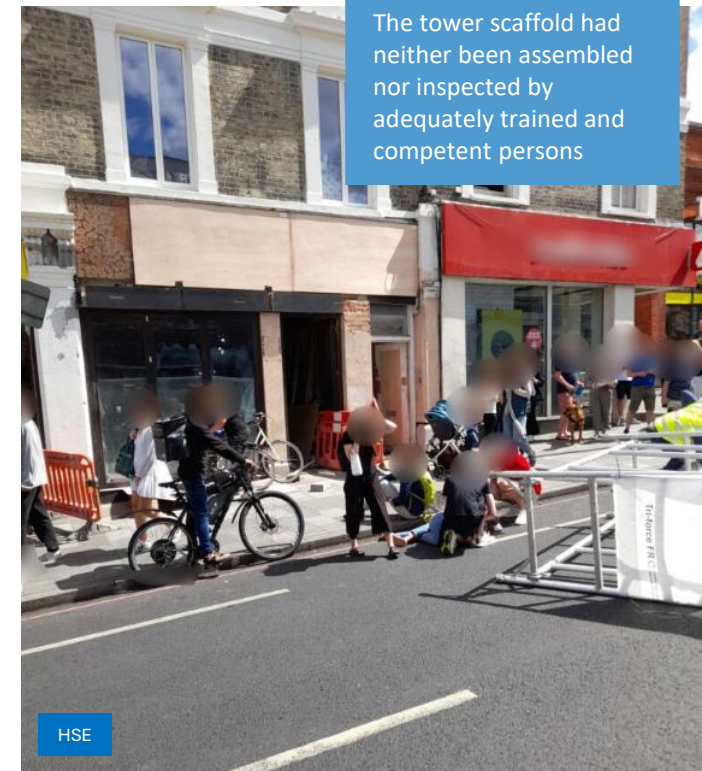
- Tower scaffolds must be erected and inspected by appropriately trained and competent people.
- Manufacturer's instructions and recognised industry guidance should be followed when assembling tower scaffolds.
- Adding sheeting can significantly increase wind loading and affect the stability of a scaffold.
- Temporary structures must be capable of withstanding foreseeable environmental conditions, including wind.
- Work on or near public areas must include effective measures to protect and separate members of the public.
- Changes to a scaffold, such as adding sheeting, should prompt consideration of whether the existing risk assessment and stability arrangements remain adequate.

Additional Context

Sheeting should not be regarded as a minor addition to a scaffold. Wind acting against a sheeted surface can create substantial forces and increase the risk of overturning. Dutyholders should consider these additional loads before sheeting is installed and ensure that the structure remains stable under foreseeable conditions.

More Information

Guidance on tower scaffolds can be accessed at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/scaffold.htm>



The tower scaffold had neither been assembled nor inspected by adequately trained and competent persons

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Fall Through Fragile Barn Roof Left Bricklayer With Broken Back

Summary

A building contractor has been fined after a bricklayer suffered serious injuries when he fell through a fragile barn roof. The worker fell approximately eight feet onto a concrete floor, breaking two vertebrae in his back and fracturing his sternum.

What Happened

On 5 February 2025, the bricklayer was part of a team carrying out repairs to the roof of a barn. While working on the roof, he stepped onto a polycarbonate roof sheet and fell through it, landing on the concrete floor below.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the building contractor had failed to ensure adequate measures were in place to protect employees and contractors working at height. There was no risk assessment or safe system of work for the activity being undertaken.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £5,744 in costs.

Key Learning Points

- Fragile roof surfaces must be identified before work begins and treated as a significant fall risk.
- Work at height must be properly planned and subject to a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.
- Safe systems of work and appropriate fall-prevention measures must be established before roof work starts.
- Employers must ensure employees and contractors are protected from the risks associated with working at height.



HSE

The worker had been carrying out roof repairs to the barn when he stepped on a polycarbonate roof sheet and fell approximately eight feet to the concrete floor below



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Behind the Scenes

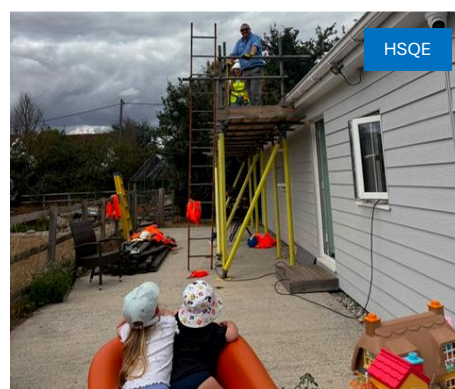
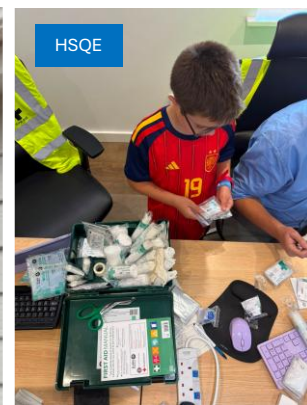
Several of our customers have told us they'd like to know a little more about the people behind HSQE Ltd and our online learning platform, VitalSkills.co.uk. So, we thought we'd share a glimpse behind the scenes.

We design, create, deliver, support and update all our courses ourselves, using in-house Subject Matter Experts, Developers and Customer Care teams.

These photos were taken while filming a new hazard spotting video and show just some of the people involved in bringing our training to life.

It's very much a team effort and, as a family business, sometimes the next generation gets involved too. As you can see from the photos, there's usually plenty of fun along the way!

How many hazards can you spot?



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YouTube

Unsafe Excavation Led to Worker Suffering Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

A construction contractor received a six-month suspended prison sentence after a worker suffered life-changing injuries during construction work. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) subsequently identified serious shortcomings in the way work at the site had been planned, managed and monitored. Inspectors found issues relating to the stability of structures, excavations, work at height and management and supervision arrangements. Multiple enforcement notices were issued following HSE's visits to the site.



HSE

Excavation and stability structure concerns

What Happened

Following the incident, rather than waiting for paramedics to arrive, the contractor and another person moved the injured operative into a works van and took him to hospital. The incident was not reported to HSE at the time. Two months later, the injured worker's solicitor notified HSE of what had happened. HSE later highlighted that the failure to report the incident meant other workers continued to be exposed to risks at the site.

The Investigation

HSE inspectors made several visits to the construction site following the report. They found that work being undertaken at the time of the incident, as well as work that had continued subsequently, had not been suitably planned, managed or monitored. Inspectors identified concerns relating to:

- The stability of structures.
- Excavation work.
- Work at height.
- Management and supervision arrangements.

The failings resulted in multiple enforcement notices being issued. HSE stated that appropriate measures, including properly planning the work and shoring the excavation walls, could have prevented the incident.

The Outcome

The contractor pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 by virtue of Regulation 15(2) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, suspended for two years. He was also ordered to pay £4,608.32 in costs and a £154 surcharge.

Additional Context

Regulation 15 of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 places duties on contractors carrying out construction work. Contractors must plan, manage and monitor construction

work under their control so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, it is carried out without risks to health and safety.

Key Learning Points

- Construction work must be properly planned, managed and monitored.
- Excavations must be adequately controlled, including taking appropriate measures to prevent collapse.
- Risks associated with structural stability and work at height must be properly assessed and controlled.
- Suitable management and supervision arrangements must be maintained throughout construction work.
- Reportable workplace incidents must be reported in accordance with the relevant legal requirements.
- Failing to report a serious incident can leave other workers exposed to risks that might otherwise have been identified and controlled.
- Individuals, as well as companies, can face enforcement action where health and safety duties are breached.

More Information

Managing health and safety in construction – Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015: Guidance on Regulations (L153). Can be accessed at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l153.pdf>



Fall risk from open edge

HSE



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Unprotected Roof Light Led to Worker Suffering Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

A construction company has been fined £60,000 after a worker suffered life-changing injuries when he fell through an unprotected roof light during refurbishment work at a domestic property in London. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that suitable measures had not been taken to prevent workers from falling from height.

What Happened

On 10 November 2023, a worker was carrying out roof refurbishment work at a property in Fulham. While passing materials through an open and unprotected roof light, he fell through the opening onto the concrete floor below, sustaining serious injuries.

The
unprotected
roof light



The Investigation

The HSE investigation found that the company had failed to adequately control the risk of falling from height.

Suitable precautions such as scaffolding, guard rails, an internal crash deck or harness systems had not been provided.



The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005.

It was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £6,070 in costs.

The HSE inspector described the incident as “wholly avoidable” and stressed that appropriate measures to prevent a fall could have prevented the worker's injuries.

The area where the
injured person fell

Key Learning Points

- Work at height must be properly planned, supervised and carried out safely.
- Open roof lights and similar openings must be treated as significant fall hazards.
- Suitable measures should be used to prevent falls, including appropriate edge protection, guard rails or other collective protection.
- Where collective measures cannot adequately control the risk, suitable personal fall protection may be required.
- Employers must ensure people carrying out work at height are competent and that appropriate precautions are in place before work begins.
- Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of workplace fatalities and serious injuries.

Additional Context

Falls from height accounted for around a quarter of worker deaths in Great Britain during 2025/26.

Work at height includes work in any place where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury if suitable precautions were not in place.

More Information

Further guidance is available from the HSE in Working at height: A brief guide (INDG401). The document is available, free of charge, at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>



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Inadequate Welfare Facilities and Asbestos Training Put Waste Workers at Risk

Summary

A waste and recycling company has been fined £36,000 after repeatedly failing to provide basic welfare facilities and asbestos awareness training for workers handling waste at a site in North Wales. The failures continued despite the company having received enforcement action on several occasions over an 11-year period.

What Happened

Employees were required to sort waste and recyclable materials by hand. However, a routine inspection found they were not provided with suitable facilities to wash and dry themselves after carrying out the work. Warm running water, soap and adequate means of drying were not available. Inspectors also identified that asbestos-containing material had been brought onto the site on at least one occasion, but employees had not been provided with asbestos awareness training.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had previously been subject to enforcement action on several occasions over an 11-year period. The previous action related to welfare provision and training, with inspectors repeatedly identifying failures to maintain the minimum health and safety standards required.

HSE highlighted that adequate washing facilities are important for workers handling waste because they help prevent exposure to potentially harmful microorganisms. Asbestos awareness training was also necessary because workers could encounter asbestos-containing materials.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £36,000 and ordered to pay £8,867 in costs.

Key Learning Points

- Suitable washing facilities, including warm running water, soap and appropriate means of drying, are a basic workplace welfare requirement.
- Employers should consider the hygiene risks associated with workers handling waste and provide facilities that allow them to clean themselves properly.
- Where employees may encounter asbestos-containing materials during their work, appropriate asbestos awareness training must be provided.
- Employers should regularly review welfare arrangements and training requirements to ensure they remain suitable for the work being undertaken.

More Information

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 can be found at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/632/contents>

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 can be found at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/3004/contents>

Asbestos & You quick guide for trades can be accessed at:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/asbestos-you/>

We also have several Asbestos Awareness courses online.

RoSPA & CPD Asbestos Awareness (Category A):

<https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/asbestos-awareness/>

IATP Asbestos Awareness:

<https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/asbestos-awareness-iatp/>

RoSPA & CPD Asbestos Awareness for Architects and Designers

<https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/asbestos-awareness-designers/>

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Would you Recognise Sexual Harassment at Work & Know How to Respond?

Sexual harassment is not always obvious. It can include comments, jokes, gestures, unwanted attention, physical behaviour or digital communications, and a single incident can be enough. Behaviour dismissed as flirting, humour or "banter" may be unwanted and leave someone feeling intimidated, humiliated or uncomfortable.

Everyone has a role in recognising inappropriate behaviour and maintaining respectful workplace standards, while managers have additional responsibilities for responding to concerns and taking appropriate action. Employers also have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment – making awareness, early intervention and effective management increasingly important.



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everyone needs to know**

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Sexual Harassment Awareness for Managers

**Information that managers and
supervisors need to know**

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- CPD Assured
- Immediate Start
- Self-Paced Learning
- All Course Materials Included
- Final Assessment Included
- Digital Certificate Included
- No Hidden Charges
- £15+VAT Per User
- Multi-User Discounts:
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Unsafe Dismantling Led to Worker Suffering Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

An event structure company and one of its directors have been prosecuted after a worker suffered severe, life-changing injuries when a steel beam weighing more than 100kg fell onto her during dismantling work.

The worker sustained multiple fractures to her back, a punctured lung and a broken leg. She underwent an 11-hour operation and spent three months in hospital.

What Happened

The incident occurred in Surrey in June 2024 while workers were dismantling an internal temporary steel frame. A ratchet strap was being used to lower a steel beam weighing more than 100kg. However, the strap was not designed for lifting or lowering loads. It failed, causing the beam to fall onto a 38-year-old employee.

The director responsible for the work had decided to use the ratchet strap and instructed workers where to stand. The method continued to be used even after the injured worker had raised concerns about whether it was safe.

The worker suffered extensive injuries and continues to experience the effects of the incident. In her victim personal statement, she described how her life had been “completely turned upside down” and said she would never be able to live the life she had before the accident.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to ensure the dismantling of the internal steel frame was properly planned and carried out safely.

HSE guidance states that demolition and dismantling arrangements should be established in writing before work begins. A safe system of work, such as a method statement, should identify the sequence of work required to prevent accidental collapse.

The investigation also identified the use of unsuitable work equipment as a significant factor in the incident.



The steel beam weighing over 100kg

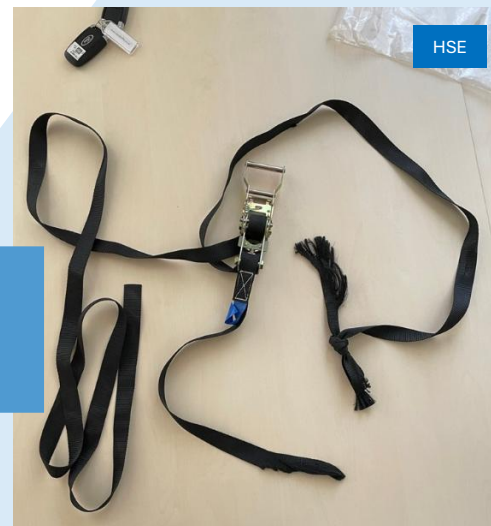
The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. It was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay £6,949 in costs.

The company director also pleaded guilty to health and safety offences and received a community order requiring 75 hours of unpaid work.

Key Learning Points

- Dismantling work must be properly planned before it begins, with a suitable safe system of work.
- Equipment used to lift or lower loads must be designed and suitable for that purpose.
- The sequence of dismantling should be established to maintain structural stability and prevent uncontrolled movement or collapse.
- Workers should be positioned away from areas where they could be struck by falling or moving components.
- Concerns raised by workers about unsafe methods should be taken seriously and acted upon before work continues.
- Directors and managers making decisions about how work is carried out have an important responsibility to ensure those decisions do not expose workers to avoidable risks.



The ratchet strap

More Information

HSE provides guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/buildings.htm>



Dust Exposure Put Food Manufacturing Workers at Risk of Occupational Asthma

Summary

A food manufacturer has been fined £120,000 after employees were exposed to potentially harmful levels of airborne dust and risks associated with repeatedly handling heavy sacks. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that workers were exposed to inhalable dust at concentrations above workplace exposure limits, putting them at risk of developing occupational asthma.

What Happened

During an inspection in December 2024, HSE identified several unsafe practices that were contributing to employees' exposure to dust. These included:

- Dust escaping from machinery due to leaks.
- Compressed air being used to blow down dust deposits.
- Dry sweeping with brushes and brooms.

Subsequent workplace monitoring confirmed that employees were being exposed to inhalable dust concentrations above the relevant workplace exposure limits.

Inspectors also found that workers were routinely required to manually lift 25kg sacks of ingredients. Repeated handling of heavy loads can increase the risk of musculoskeletal injuries and should be avoided where reasonably practicable.

The Investigation

HSE found that adequate measures had not been taken to control employees' exposure to hazardous dust or reduce manual handling risks.

The site had previously been inspected in 2021, when enforcement action was taken over both dust exposure and manual handling risks.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

It was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay £6,270 in costs.

More Information

Further guidance on controlling exposure to flour dust, can be accessed at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/direct-advice/baking.htm>

Key Learning Points

- Exposure to flour and other ingredient dusts must be adequately controlled to prevent occupational asthma and other respiratory illnesses.
- Machinery and equipment should be properly maintained to prevent dust escaping through leaks.
- Dry sweeping and the use of compressed air can disturb settled dust and significantly increase airborne exposure.
- Employers should use suitable methods for cleaning and controlling dust that minimise its release into the workplace.
- Manual handling risks should be assessed, with repeated lifting of heavy sacks avoided or reduced wherever reasonably practicable.
- Previous enforcement action should prompt employers to ensure that identified risks are properly addressed and improvements are sustained.



Unsafe Roof Work Put Workers at Risk of Falls From Height

Summary

A construction company and a director have been fined after workers were repeatedly exposed to serious risks while carrying out roof work. The unsafe practices included working on a roof without edge protection and using a makeshift platform balanced on a stepladder to gain access.

What Happened

In January 2024, members of the public sent photographs to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) showing workers carrying out roof work without suitable measures to prevent falls. There was no safe means of accessing the roof, and workers were photographed standing on a makeshift platform balanced on a stepladder. The workers were employed by a subcontractor, whose risk assessment had identified measures including scaffolding around the roof as necessary controls. However, these measures had not been put in place.



The Investigation

HSE found that adequate controls to prevent falls from height were absent on at least two separate occasions. The wider construction project had been underway since October 2020 and had been managed by two successive principal contractors under the direction of the same director.

Significantly, HSE inspectors had previously responded to concerns raised by members of the public and occupants of surrounding buildings. Enforcement action had been taken and the director had met with inspectors to discuss improvements to health and safety management. Despite these interventions, further unsafe roof work was reported in January 2024.

The Outcome

The principal contractor pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. It was fined £4,020 and ordered to pay a £1,608 surcharge.

The director also pleaded guilty to an offence under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. He was fined £2,300, ordered to pay a £1,108 surcharge and £8,000 in costs.

Key Learning Points

- Roof work must be properly planned and appropriate precautions put in place before work begins.
- Workers must have a safe means of accessing and leaving the roof.
- Suitable edge protection should be provided where there is a risk of falling.
- Control measures identified within risk assessments must actually be implemented and maintained.
- Principal contractors must effectively manage and monitor contractors and subcontractors working on site.
- Previous warnings or enforcement action should prompt effective and sustained improvements in health and safety management.



Unsecured Materials Killed Young Apprentice

Summary

An 18-year-old apprentice was killed after unsecured wooden boards stored vertically against a wall fell on her while she was working alone at a residential renovation project in North Wales. The property management company responsible was fined £50,000, while a director received a 26-week suspended prison sentence.

What Happened

The apprentice was working as a joiner at a property undergoing a full renovation when the incident occurred in December 2023.

A total of 28 large boards had been stacked vertically and unsecured against a wall. Some potentially weighed up to 30kg each. It is believed the apprentice was attempting to retrieve a plywood board when part of the stack toppled, crushing her neck and causing fatal injuries.

She was working alone and was later found at the property after failing to respond to messages or return home.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the risks associated with storing the boards vertically had not been identified and no measures had been taken to prevent them from falling.

Investigators identified a number of significant shortcomings, including:

- inadequate site supervision;
- no suitable lone-working policy or procedure;
- no suitable procedure for the safe storage of board materials;
- inadequate risk assessment; and
- inadequate information, instruction, training and supervision.

HSE concluded that the company had failed to provide safe systems of work and that the failures were attributable to the neglect of a company director.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay £10,080 in costs.

A company director pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37 of the same Act. He was sentenced to 26 weeks' imprisonment, suspended for two years, and ordered to pay £7,886 in costs.

Key Learning Points

- Large boards and sheet materials must be stored so they cannot fall or topple.
- Boards should normally be stored horizontally on a level surface using suitable pallets or battens.
- Materials stored on edge require adequate support and securing.
- Risk assessments should consider storage arrangements as well as the work being undertaken.
- Lone workers require appropriate training, supervision and monitoring, including arrangements for confirming their safety.
- Young and inexperienced workers may require additional supervision and support.

Additional Context

HSE guidance states that building materials must be stored safely so they cannot topple or roll over. Boards should be stored horizontally on a level surface and should never be stacked on edge without adequate support.

More Information

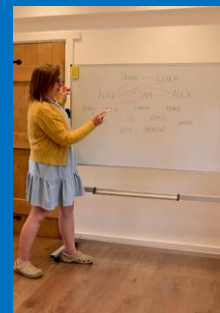
Guidance on the safe stacking of materials is available at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wis2.pdf>

Guidance on protecting lone workers is available at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

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Unprotected Excavation Edge Led to Tipper Truck Falling from Ramp

Summary

A joint venture working on the HS2 rail project was fined after a 20-tonne tipper truck fell approximately two metres from the edge of an excavation ramp, injuring the driver. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that vehicle routes at the site lacked adequate controls, including edge protection and signage, and identified concerns relating to unsupported excavation faces.

What Happened

The incident occurred on 27 July 2021 at an HS2 construction site near Uxbridge in West London, where work was taking place to construct a cut-and-cover tunnel. A haulage contractor had been engaged to transport excavated material around the site using 20-tonne tipper trucks. Its drivers had been operating at the site for approximately two weeks before the incident.

On the morning of the incident, the earthworks team changed its working area after it was determined that material from the original location could not be used. This required the excavator's loading position to be moved and a new traffic route to be established.

The change resulted in an unprotected edge being left on the bank above the intended new route.

The first tipper truck driver subsequently used the higher-level bank rather than the intended route and his vehicle slipped on the ramp. A second driver followed the same route, but his vehicle veered over the edge of the bank. The truck fell approximately two metres and landed on its driver's side. The driver suffered a broken nose, a cut to his hand and a shoulder injury.

The Investigation

HSE inspectors visited the site following the incident. They found that there were no signs on the haulage routes being used and no edge protection to prevent vehicles from travelling over the edge of the ramp. Inspectors also identified excavations adjacent to some vehicle routes with unsupported vertical faces that were at risk of collapse. The investigation established that the change to the working area and traffic route had inadvertently created an unprotected edge. The arrangements in place were insufficient to ensure that drivers followed the intended new route safely.

The Outcome

The joint venture responsible for the site pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay £8,974 in costs.

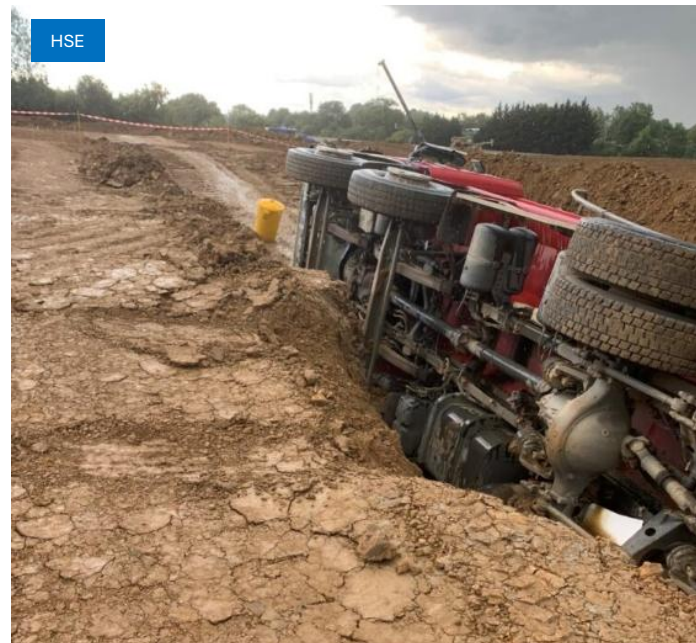
Key Learning Points

- Changes to vehicle routes should be properly planned, assessed and communicated before they are brought into use.
- Suitable physical edge protection, such as safety banks, should be provided where vehicles operate close to excavations or other significant drops.
- Haul routes should be clearly defined so that drivers can readily identify the route they are expected to follow.
- Changes to working arrangements can introduce new hazards and should trigger a review of the relevant risk controls.
- Excavations should be designed and managed to prevent collapse, including where they are located alongside vehicle routes.
- Haul roads on construction sites should be appropriately managed as temporary works.

More Information

HSG 144, The safe use of vehicles on construction sites can be accessed at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg144.pdf>



The 20-tonne truck ended up on its side after falling off excavation edge



Unsafe Work at Height Left Worker With Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

A principal contractor has been fined £90,000 after a worker suffered life-changing injuries when he fell from a tipping bucket being used to carry out work at height. The worker spent months in hospital following the incident and has been left with significant mobility problems and severe ongoing pain.

What Happened

The 38-year-old worker was dismantling pipework at a site in Kent when the incident occurred in March 2023.

A scissor lift had originally been ordered for the work, but it was too tall to enter the area. Instead, a tipping bucket attached to a fork lift truck was used to raise the worker. While working from the raised bucket, he fell onto the concrete floor below, sustaining serious injuries that have had a profound and lasting impact on his life.

In a victim personal statement, he described himself as being “physically ruined” by the incident and said the accident had taken away his identity and his ability to do many of the things he previously enjoyed with his children.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that there were no suitable arrangements in place to manage contractors and ensure work was carried out safely.

When the scissor lift proved unsuitable, no action was taken to establish an alternative safe system of work.

The investigation also identified that:

- Workers had not received appropriate training in the use of the fork lift truck or scissor lift.

- There were no adequate arrangements to prevent untrained people from accessing the equipment.
- Adequate supervision was not provided.
- Significant failings relating to unsafe work at height had continued over a prolonged period.
- The company had previously received advice and enforcement action concerning contractor management and unsafe work at height.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £90,000 and ordered to pay £27,241 in costs.

More Information

More information about working at height can be accessed at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.htm>

Key Learning Points

- Work at height must be properly planned, appropriately supervised and carried out by competent people.
- Equipment used for work at height must be suitable for the task and the working environment.
- If planned equipment cannot be used safely, an alternative safe system of work must be established rather than adopting an unsuitable method.
- Employers and principal contractors need effective arrangements for managing and supervising contractors.
- Access to work equipment should be restricted to people who have received appropriate training and are competent to use it.
- Previous warnings and enforcement action should prompt effective and sustained improvements in health and safety management.



The fork lift truck used with the bucket in the background

HSE



Fall From School Roof Left Worker With Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

A school trust was fined £32,000 after a site supervisor suffered serious, life-changing injuries when he fell from the roof of a primary school onto a concrete playground. The incident highlighted the importance of properly planning work at height, assessing the risks and ensuring suitable measures are in place to prevent falls.

What Happened

The site supervisor was working at a primary school during an inset day in September 2024. He used an unsecured ladder to access the school roof to retrieve footballs. While on the roof, he fell onto the concrete playground below and was later found by a member of the public.

He suffered serious injuries, including bleeding on the brain and fractures to his face, hand and foot. His injuries have had a significant and lasting effect, including memory problems, speech difficulties and problems carrying out everyday cognitive tasks.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that there was no edge protection or other means of preventing or mitigating a fall from the roof.

The organisation also did not have a standalone work at height risk assessment or safe system of work setting out how tasks of this nature should be undertaken safely.

Falls from height remain one of the most serious workplace risks and accounted for more than a quarter of worker fatalities in Great Britain during 2025/26.

The Outcome

The organisation pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

It was fined £32,000 and ordered to pay £6,360 in costs.

The fine was significantly reduced because the organisation was a non-profit charitable body.

Key Learning Points

- Work at height should be avoided where it is reasonably practicable to do so.
- Where work at height cannot be avoided, it must be properly planned, supervised and carried out safely.
- Suitable risk assessments and safe systems of work should cover both routine and occasional tasks, including seemingly simple activities such as retrieving objects from a roof.
- Appropriate measures, such as edge protection, should be used to prevent falls wherever required.
- Ladders must be suitable for the task, appropriately positioned and secured where necessary.
- Even short-duration or infrequent tasks at height can result in life-changing or fatal injuries if suitable precautions are not taken.

More Information

The HSE's Brief Guide to Working at Height can be accessed at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.htm>

The ladder association's LA455 'Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders - A brief guide' can be accessed at: <https://ladderassociation.org.uk/la455/>

We also have online awareness courses available:

RoSPA & CPD Working at Height Awareness:
<https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/working-at-height/>

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