



STACS of News

JUNE 2018

VOLUME 14, Iss. 6

Workers suffer serious leg injuries

An engineering company was sentenced after two employees were seriously injured during work to dispose of old gas cylinders.

The court heard how a worker at was asked to decommission approximately eight or nine gas cylinders believed to contain oxygen. The employee laid the cylinders outside in the yard with the pressure release valves open to try and empty out any gas that remained inside. Later, the employee began to remove the pressure release valves from the tops of the cylinders.

On the last cylinder it became apparent that the valve was stuck and could not be removed. Another employee of the company came to help and they attempted to dislodge and remove the valve using a hammer. During this attempt the cylinder and valve separated violently as gas which remained in the cylinder was released. The cylinder fired into the workshop and struck two employees who were standing inside.

Both employees suffered serious injuries to their lower limbs, one sustaining a broken tibia and fibular to both legs, and the other a broken tibia and fibular to his left leg and extensive nerve and tissue damage. Both men required multiple surgeries and spent several weeks in hospital. One of them has still not been able to return to work.

An investigation by the HSE found that, at the time of the incident, there was no safe system of work in place for the decommissioning and disposal of old gas cylinders, and the company had not carried out a suitable risk assessment to identify the associated risks.

The engineering company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £14,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,687.00.

Safe Handling of Compressed Gas Cylinders

- Never tamper with safety devices in valves or cylinders
- When returning empty cylinders, close the valve, leave some positive pressure in the cylinder, replace the protective cap originally shipped with the cylinder, mark and label the cylinder "EMPTY"
- Know and understand the properties, uses, and safety precautions of the gas before using the gas



Worker falls down lift shaft

A care home was sentenced after an employee suffered significant injuries after falling around 1.5 metres down a lift shaft.

The court heard how the employee was using the platform lift to transport the residents' breakfasts from the kitchen to the dining room on a different floor. An interlock system which meant that the lift door could only be opened when the platform was at the right floor was broken. The employee fell down the shaft because the platform was at a lower level. An investigation by the HSE found that the door locking mechanism had been broken for about a month prior to this incident and management failed to deal with the known issue of employees overriding the door safety locking mechanism with a screwdriver. The lift had also not been thoroughly examined.

The care home pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and Regulation 9(3)(a)(i) of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations and has been fined £14,000.00 and ordered to pay costs of £2535.90

Worker Injured

An electrical contracting firm has been fined following one of its employees sustaining severe lacerations after his hand made contact with the moving blade of a mitre saw due to a faulty guard.

The court heard the injured employee cut his hand while using a mitre or 'chop saw' with a faulty guard. The guard failed to return to position and cover the blade when the saw was in the upright position, meaning that when the employee reached across it he severely cut his wrist.

A HSE investigation found that a lack of suitable maintenance meant the guard did not operate as intended and did not come down to cover the dangerous blade and protect the user.

The electrical contractor pleaded guilty of breaching Regulation 11 (3) of the Provision and Use of Workplace Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined £4,000 and ordered to pay costs of £1,060.50.

MEWP safety

A Devon based construction company has been fined after placing employees and members of the public at risk of serious injury by failing to suitably maintain their fleet of lorry mounted elevated work platforms (MEWP).

Following a fatal incident, a subsequent investigation by the HSE found that the MEWP involved in the incident failed to automatically stop before overslewing, increasing the risk of vehicle overturn.

Exeter Crown Court heard that there was an almost complete lack of a planned preventative maintenance system at the company. The investigation also found that workers had not been given adequate information or instruction regarding how to use or maintain the machines or how to carry out pre-use checks. There is no suggestion that the failings of the company caused the fatal incident in Dawlish.

The construction company was found guilty of breaching Regulation 2 (1) and 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and has been fined £60,000 and ordered to pay costs of £70,000.

Electric Shock

A man has been sentenced to 18 weeks in prison after a worker received serious injuries from an electric shock.

The court heard that a worker, under instruction from George Jones, sustained serious injuries whilst plugging a tyre stripping machine into a wall socket. The incident, which took place at Carew Cars, Carew Airfield, Pembrokeshire, could easily have led to a fatality.

An investigation by the HSE found that the electrical installation at the unit in Carew Airfield operated by George Jones as part of his scrap metal business was unsafe and was more suited to a domestic premise. The socket in use was in poor condition with exposed wires. The roof of the building had holes in it and there was evidence of water ingress on the wall behind the socket which contributed to the incident.

George William Edward Jones of Strawberry Fields, Pembrokeshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 4 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and was sentenced to 18 weeks in prison to run concurrently with his existing sentence.

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