

£30k fine for dental supply company after explosion of flammable liquid

A dental supply company has been fined £30k after an explosion of flammable liquid led to a fire at its premises in Halifax.

John Winters & Company Limited pleaded guilty to safety breaches after one of its employees was put at serious risk in the explosion that led to flames ripping through the building.

Leeds Magistrates' Court heard that, on 23rd April 2021, the worker had been decanting heptane from a metal drum into a plastic bulk container. Other employees were also put at risk when the explosion resulted in a fire spreading rapidly throughout other production buildings. Nobody was physically injured in the fire which was tackled by more than 60 firefighters at its height.



The explosion led to a devastating fire

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the decanting of flammables had been unsafely undertaken at the company for several years [despite well-known industry guidance](#).

The splash filling of Heptane generated a static charge creating a spark which caused an explosion during the decanting process, flammable material then spread further as there were no containment measures. The poor practice of storing cardboard boxes nearby fuelled the fire allowing it to spread significantly.



The fire spread quickly throughout the premises

John Winters & Company Limited of Washer Lane, Halifax, West Yorkshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company has been fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £8,030.94 in costs.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Andrea Jones said: "Implementing appropriate control measures when handling flammable liquids is essential to prevent the generation of a static charge that can result in explosions and fires.

"The incident could so easily have been avoided by preventing splash filling, introducing appropriate earthing and bonding systems, training and supervision.

"HSE has well know guidance to help companies to understand what's needed."



The fire spread quickly following the

explosion.

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.
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. Guidance is available on safe use and handling of flammable liquids [is available](#).