

# It's time for farmers to 'think differently about safety' says regulator

A three-year-old child was among 27 people killed in agriculture-related activities in the last 12 months, as Britain's workplace regulator calls for farmers to 'think differently about safety'.

The call for a cultural shift away from poor behaviours comes as the rate of fatal injuries in the sector remains one of the highest of all major industries.

Provisional figures for 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 show that of the 27 people killed – 21 were workers with the three-year-old child among six members of the public to lose their lives.

Being killed by an animal (cattle) is the major cause of death in 2022-23. (Vehicle related incidents are the major cause when looking at the 5 year average.)

Although, the number of fatal injuries to workers in the agricultural sector has fallen by around half since the early 1980s, the rate of fatalities, which is based on the number of people at work in the sector, has remained high with little change. The worker fatal injury rate is 21-times higher than the average five-year annual rate across all industries.

The most common causes of death in agriculture have not changed for many years. This year is no different. The five most common causes of work-related death in agriculture are:

- Being crushed or trampled by animals, usually cattle.
- Falling from height
- Being struck by a moving vehicle
- Coming into contact with machinery, during operation or maintenance
- Being struck by an object, such as bales or trees

Older workers, those aged 65 and older, accounted for a third of all worker fatalities.

Publication of the report ([Statistics – Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/work-related-fatal-injuries-in-great-britain.htm)) coincides with the start of Farm Safety Week, which begins today (Monday 17 July) and runs until Friday.

Sue Thompson, Head of Agriculture, Health & Safety Executive, said:

"It is disappointing that yet again so many farming families and communities are left devastated when their loved ones are killed or suffer life changing illnesses caused by work.

“The number of fatalities remains stubbornly high and the rate of workplace fatal injury in agriculture still remains the highest of any sector.

“Agriculture is a vital part of the UK economy and it is not acceptable that it continues to fall short when it comes to managing risk in the workplace. It is all the more tragic that we still see children killed by farming activities. It’s time to think differently and not tolerate this any longer. Children must not be in farm workplace.

“We need everyone to play their part to improve the culture and change the poor behaviours we see far too frequently.”

- Earlier this year HSE launched [‘Your Farm – Your Future’](#) – a website bringing together lots of great advice on using vehicles safely on farms.

“I encourage everyone to think differently about safety, do things the right way and have the courage to ‘call out’ poor practices whenever they are seen.

“Agriculture will continue to be a priority sector for HSE. We are committed to making workplaces safer and healthier and holding employers to account for their actions, as part of our mission to protect people and places.

“Awareness of the hazards and health risks and legal requirements has never been higher. It’s great that Farm Safety Week brings the issue into focus.

“But it’s regrettable that we’re not yet seeing the widespread changes in attitude towards safety, and the improvements in behaviour that will reduce the numbers of people injured or killed.

“Everyone in agriculture has a role to play in making the changes we all want to see. It is only with the support and commitment of each and every farmer that we will see improvement. Together, we can make farming healthier and safer.”

#### **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. The report highlights trends and provides summaries of each fatality involving employees, the self-employed and members of the public. The full report along with summaries of the circumstances of the individual fatal injuries can be read at – [Fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
3. Farm Safety Week is an initiative led by the Farm Safety Foundation and supported by the Farm Safety Partnerships, The Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and the

Health & Safety Authority, Ireland.

4. HSE continues to work with stakeholders across the farming and forestry sector to keep up the pressure to manage risk in the workplace to reduce the likelihood of serious injury, ill health and death.
5. For information on how to stay healthy and safe in agriculture see HSE guidance [What a good farm looks like – Agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/what-a-good-farm-looks-like.html) and [Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/farmwise.html)
6. [The Your Farm – Your Future website](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/your-farm-your-future.html) – bringing together lots of great advice on using vehicles safely on farms is available.

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## **HSE Media Centre 2023-07-14 14:52:21**

A leading workwear company has been fined £400,000 after an employee had the skin ripped off the palm of her left hand.

Sharon Chaplin, 51, was working an evening shift for Johnsons Textile Services Limited at the company's site in Burbage, Hinckley on 16 December 2021.

The mother of two, from Barwell in Leicestershire, was trying to manually clean a sensor to initiate movement of a conveyor belt, but as she did so, her left hand was drawn into a gap where two conveyor belts meet.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Johnsons Textile Services Limited had inadequately guarded machinery, did not have a suitable and sufficient [risk assessment for the machinery](#) that caused the injury and inadequate health and safety management systems in place.

Johnsons Textile Services Limited, of Logix Road, Burbage, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER).

The company was fined £400,000 and was ordered to pay £5,919.63 costs at a hearing at Leicester Magistrates Court on 12 July 2023.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Nicholas Moreby said "This injury was easily preventable by applying known standards of machinery guarding and the risk should have been identified. Employers should make sure they properly assess risk and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from dangerous parts of machinery".

"The fine imposed on them should underline to all employers that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to follow the regulations extremely seriously.

"We will not hesitate to take action against companies which do not do all that they should to keep people safe."

This prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyers Karen Park and Nathan Cook.

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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 guidance on [equipment and machinery](#) is available.

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## **Tissue manufacturer fined £1million after employee loses an eye**

A Welsh company that manufactures kitchen and toilet tissue paper has been fined £1million after an employee was seriously injured when he was struck in the face by a crane hook.

On 5 November 2019, the man who worked for Sofidel UK Limited based in Neath, was attempting to free a paper reel, which had become stuck on the exit rails of a paper machine, by using an overhead crane.

During the operation, part of the crane contacted the spinning reel causing the crane hook to swing violently striking the man in the face. He suffered the loss of an eye, multiple fractures to the face and lost 9 teeth.

HSE has guidance about the [safe use of work equipment](#).

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Sofidel UK Limited, based at Brunel Way, Baglan Energy Park, Briton Ferry, Neath, failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to identify the hazards posed by paper reels which did not eject correctly from the machine. They also failed to ensure that control measures were in place and that employees were provided with information and instructions on what to do should this situation arise. The issue was happening regularly, yet no risk assessment had been undertaken despite operators being provided with basic equipment to use in these circumstances.

At Swansea Magistrates' Court on 13 July, Sofidel UK Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £1million and ordered to pay costs of £13,446.50.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Matthew Gray, said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by carrying out a suitable risk assessment which included non-routine operations such as clearing of blockages, and by implementing appropriate control measures and safe working practices.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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## **Manufacturer fined £100,000 after worker partially severs two fingers**

A Welshpool manufacturing company has been fined £100,000 after one of its employees partially severed two fingers while trying to find a fault in a machine.

Interior Products Group Limited (known as Newmor Group Ltd at the time of the incident) manufacture and sell pre-finished fit out products to a variety of sectors.

The experienced employee, from Wrexham, was attempting [to identify a fault in an edgebander machine](#) – used to apply edging tape to the raw edges of wood panels with a hot-melt adhesive or glue.

Wrexham Magistrates' Court heard how the experienced employee suffered the injuries while checking for debris on the trimming unit of the edgebander. Having failed to turn the machine off correctly before raising it to look inside, the worker then stepped over two supporting rails and placed their fingers on a trimming unit, resulting in two being partially severed.

Following an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), it was discovered that although the company had carried out a number of risk assessments on the machine, they failed to identify the hazards presented by the cutting and trimming units from the front of the edgebander. They also failed to provide suitable and sufficient, information, instruction and

training to enable their staff to carry out activities such as cleaning, fault finding and minor repairs safely.

Interior Products Group Limited of Madocs Works, Henfaes Lane, Welshpool pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,688.

Speaking after the case HSE inspector Joe Boast 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 that safe system of working.

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

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4. Guidance on [working safely with machinery](#) is available.

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## **NHS Health Board fined £235,000 after failings resulted in man's death**

The largest health board in Scotland has been fined £235,000 after a man took his own life while in its care on 22 January 2020.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) pleaded guilty at Paisley Sheriff Court to a number of failings, including not having a suitable risk assessment in place.

Martin Donnelly, 36, who had a history of mental illness, had been medically detained at the South Ward of Dykebar Hospital in Paisley, two days before his death.

An investigation by The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) established there had been failures by NHSGGC to ensure existing ligature points at the hospital were suitably and sufficiently risk assessed, and the patients under

its care were not exposed to them.

NHSGGC had relied upon clinical measures, such as the assessment and observation of Mr Donnelly, rather than physical measures, to ensure his safety.

The NHS-issued guidance aligns with the terms of Regulation 4 of The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and its '*General Principles of Prevention*', which require the risks to be combated at source. In this case, that would have involved removing the certain taps and other ligature points, or replacing them with suitable alternatives.

NHSGGC had a duty to keep Mr Donnelly safe and failed to do so. All reasonably practicable measures were not taken by NHSGGC, which could have prevented Mr Donnelly from taking his own life.

NHSGGC pleaded guilty to breaching sections 3(1) and 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 on the 30 June 2023. At a hearing on 10 July 2023, it was fined £235,000 and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £17,625.

Speaking after the sentencing, Inspector Lesley Hammond said: "The risks presented by access to ligature points in acute psychiatric wards are well known.

"Reasonably practicable measures could have been taken by NHSGGC to reduce the risk to patients, which would have involved the removal of obvious ligature points throughout the ward, as was undertaken after this incident.

"Had a suitable and sufficient risk assessment been in place before the incident and the results acted upon, Mr Donnelly would not have been able to take his own life in the way he did."

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