

# Construction company fined £33,500 after man dies following fall from height

- Worker died after falling through unprotected skylight opening at domestic property.
- Company failed to take measures to prevent falls from height.
- HSE reminds employers of guidance for safe working at height.

Skyladder Construction Limited has been fined £33,500 after a man died when he fell through a skylight opening at a domestic property.

The company was constructing a single-storey extension with a flat roof at a property in Farnborough. On the evening of 20 July 2022, it began to rain, and the company director and an employee returned to the site at approximately 11pm to cover the new roof with a blue plastic tarpaulin, securing it with logs of wood.

Bhakta Rai accompanied the employee to the site that evening. At some point, Mr Rai went onto the roof to assist and fell through a hole intended for a skylight, falling approximately 2.5 metres onto the concrete floor below.

In an attempt to recover Mr Rai, he was lifted back through the roof opening, carried across the roof, and then brought down a ladder at the front of the property. No ambulance was called, and Mr Rai was transported to hospital in a van. He died a few days later after sustaining significant injuries, including a spinal fracture, fractured skull, possible bleed on the brain, and swelling to the head.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) attended the scene on 21 July 2022. Between the police leaving the site (at around 4am) and the HSE's arrival later that day, the tarpaulin had been replaced, covering the roof.



Tarp following the fall when police attended

An HSE investigation found that Skyladder Construction Limited failed to take suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as was reasonably practicable, any person from falling a distance liable to cause personal injury. There were no physical measures in place at the edges of the building or around the skylight openings to prevent a fall, and no measures to mitigate the distance or impact of a fall.



Tarp covering roof/hole when HSE attended

Skyladder Construction Limited also contravened a requirement imposed by an HSE inspector. During the investigation, HSE requested information from the company under Section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which it is an offence not to provide. No response was received.

HSE guidance sets out measures for planning and carrying out work at height safely. It includes practical controls that can be implemented to remove or reduce the risk of a fall. Following this guidance would have identified the risks from the unprotected roof and shown that the risk could have been eliminated entirely by changing how the work was undertaken. Further guidance can be found here: [Work at height – HSE](#).

Skyladder Construction Limited, of 8 Harbour Close, Farnborough, GU14 8HT, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and Section 33(1)(e) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for failing to provide information requested under Section 20 of the Act.

The company was fined £33,500, ordered to pay £8,472 in costs, and a £2,000 victim surcharge at Basingstoke Magistrates' Court on 31 October 2025.

Following the hearing, HSE Inspector Jenny Morris said:

“Falls when working at height remain the most common kind of workplace fatality, accounting for around a quarter of all worker deaths. In this case, this was a wholly avoidable incident – Mr Rai died in a fall which should never have been able to happen.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE Enforcement Lawyer Rebecca Schwartz and Paralegal Officer Helen Hugo.

## Further information:

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. Relevant guidance can be found here [Work at height – HSE](#)  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm>
  5. 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 can be found [here](#).
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## [HSE seeks views on proposals to enhance worker and public protection from asbestos exposure](#)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has today launched a consultation on proposals to improve the application of the Control of Asbestos Regulations and guidance around asbestos management to help protect workers and building users.

Great Britain already has one of the best workplace health and safety performances globally, with some of the lowest rates of occupational injury and fatality in Europe. These proposals build on this strong foundation to enhance protections in areas where asbestos remains a significant health risk.

The consultation aims to seek stakeholders' views on three proposals:

1. To ensure the independence and impartiality of roles in the four-stage clearance process to further minimise the risk of exposure from asbestos to workers and building users after the removal of asbestos
2. To drive up the standard of asbestos surveys to ensure dutyholders have the information they need to safely manage asbestos risks
3. To clarify the type of work that constitutes work with asbestos known as Notifiable Non-Licensed Work (NNLW)

The consultation is particularly relevant to dutyholders, asbestos analysts, asbestos removal contractors, asbestos surveyors, and associated professions

including facilities management and construction.

Rick Brunt, Director of Engagement and Policy at HSE, said:

“Asbestos continues to be a significant risk to workers in Great Britain. While we have made significant progress in managing asbestos risks, these proposals represent an important step towards further strengthening protections for workers and the public.

“We want to hear from all stakeholders involved in the asbestos regulatory system to ensure our approach is both effective and proportionate, supporting HSE’s commitment to protecting people and places whilst enabling innovation and economic growth.”

Minister for Social Security and Disability, Sir Stephen Timms, said:

“The dangers of exposure to asbestos are well known. Its legacy is that it remains the biggest cause of work-related deaths in the UK – responsible for 5,000-plus deaths per year, with many more people living with the impact of asbestos-related disease.

“In Britain we have a mature and well-established approach to the management of asbestos in buildings: the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and other regulators.

“This consultation aims to improve these regulations and enhance worker and public protection from asbestos exposure.”

The consultation runs until 9 January 2026. The full consultation document, including detailed proposals, background information and how to respond, is available on the HSE website at:

<https://consultations.hse.gov.uk/hse/proposals-control-of-asbestos-regs-2012>.

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## **Social housing management firm fined for failing to protect workers**

- Multiple workers exposed to vibration-related ill-health.
- Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome can make everyday tasks impossible.
- HSE guidance is available.

An East Midlands social housing provider has been fined £32,000 after multiple workers were diagnosed with vibration related ill-health conditions such as Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS).

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched an investigation after it received more than ten reports of vibration related ill-health in a short

period of time. The workers affected had until recently been employed by Nottingham City Homes Limited, an arms-length management organisation that managed social housing on behalf of Nottingham City Council between 2005 and 2023.

The HSE investigation found a large number of the company's employees were exposed to vibration in their day to day work. These included bricklayers, joiners, electricians, plasterers, caretakers and others – while their work was varied, all included extensive use of power tools, ranging from drills and impact drivers to vibrating plates and road breakers, over an extended period of time. Despite this, and the dangers exposure can cause, the company had not properly assessed or controlled worker's exposure to vibration.

Prolonged and regular exposure to vibration can affect a worker's health resulting in disorders of the nerves, blood supply, joints and muscles of the hands and arms. These disorders are collectively known as HAVS and symptoms can include pain, tingling, numbness and loss of strength. HAVS can make everyday tasks such as fastening buttons or holding utensils difficult or impossible.

HSE guidance, [available here](#), and in the HSE publication [Hand-arm vibration – The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 \(L140\) \(PDF\)](#), sets out practical guidance to help employers protect their employees and fulfil their legal obligation to control vibration risks. The guidance includes advice on the assessment of risk, ways to control exposure, and in-depth information about health surveillance.

The HSE investigation also found that the company had not undertaken a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks posed by vibration. Control measures, such as removing the need to use vibrating tools, using lower vibration alternatives, or limiting exposure times, had not been properly implemented. Tool maintenance and health surveillance arrangements were inadequate, and employees had not received sufficient training on the risks that they faced.

Nottingham City Homes Limited, of Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £32,000 and ordered to pay £6,226 in costs at Nottingham Magistrates' Court on 3 November 2025.

HSE inspector Tim Nicholson said: "Nottingham City Homes Limited exposed its employees to vibration through the use of power tools for a long period of time.

"The company failed to properly manage this risk which led to employees suffering ill-health – the effects of exposure to vibration can be debilitating and, once damage is done, it is irreversible.

"There is extensive guidance available that is straightforward to follow and includes calculation tools to assist in deciding what is needed to protect employees.

“Employers should take this case as a reminder that HSE will not hesitate to act against companies which do not do all that they should to keep employees safe.”

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains, and paralegal officer Jorge Kemp.

#### Further information:

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. Guidance on assessing and controlling vibration risks can be found [here](#).
5. 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 can be found [here](#) and those for Scotland [here](#).

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## Haulage company fined £250,000 following death of employee

- Man died due to company’s failures
- Company had never carried out the task before.
- HSE guidance is available.

A Middlesbrough road haulage company has been fined £250,000 after a man died while working inside a shipping container.

Gary Lee James, 30 was working for Ward Bros (Malton) Ltd at its yard at South Bank, in the early hours of 8 January 2019, when he suffered a fatal injury.

Mr James and a colleague had been standing up metal frames, each weighing approximately 120kg, within a shipping container, part of what is known as a “devanning” activity.

As the two men lifted the sixth frame, the fifth one fell back towards them, followed by the four others. Mr James was pinned by the neck between the container wall and the fallen frames. Although he was transported to James Cook University Hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest, he was sadly pronounced dead on three days later.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the frames had not been secured to the container wall. It found that Ward Bros (Malton) Ltd failed to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees, including Gary James, at work in connection with the devanning of containers.

Despite the company having never undertaken devanning work before, it failed to create a suitable and sufficient written risk assessment. There was no clear and properly planned safe system of work for its employees.

Instead, the company embarked upon an ad-hoc and ultimately unsafe system of work, which was not effectively communicated to the employees who were left largely unsupervised to determine their own methods of devanning the containers.

HSE guidance states that employers must identify hazards, assess risk, and take action to eliminate or control those risks. Employers are not expected to eliminate all risks but they need to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble. Further guidance can be found here:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm>

Ward Bros (Malton) Ltd, of Dormor Way, South Bank, Middlesbrough, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £250,000 with costs to be determined at a later date at Teesside Crown Court on 31 October 2025.

HSE Inspector Joy Craighead said: "This was a tragic and preventable incident, that cost a young man his life.

"Every year, a significant proportion of accidents, many of them serious and sometimes fatal, occur as a result of poorly planned work activity.

"In this case there was a complete failure to risk assess and implement control measures. Had the company done so, Mr James would still be alive."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Jonathan Bambro and law clerk Rebecca Forman.

Further information:

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. Relevant guidance can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm>
5. 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 can be found [here](#).

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## **Stress Awareness Week 2025: Time to act on work-related stress**

**Work-related stress remains one of the biggest causes of ill health in the workplace. As Stress Awareness Week 2025 begins, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reminding employers that preventing work-related stress is a legal duty – not just a nice-to-have.**

In 2023/24, HSE statistics show that 776,000 workers reported suffering from work-related stress, depression or anxiety. This accounted for nearly half of all self-reported work-related ill health and led to an estimated 16.4 million working days lost over the same period.

Failing to manage stress effectively can also result in reduced productivity and higher staff turnover.

### **Stress risk assessments – it's the law**

Some employers may not be aware that they must [assess and manage the risks of work-related stress](#) in the same way as other health and safety risks.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must assess risks and take reasonably practicable steps to prevent harm – including from stress.

It's not just about responding when problems arise. It's about taking proactive steps to understand the pressures your employees face and acting on what you find.

### **Free tools and support from HSE**

HSE's [Working Minds campaign](#) makes it easier for employers to take action. It's based on five simple steps – the 5 Rs:

1. Reach out – start the conversation
2. Recognise – spot the signs and causes of stress
3. Respond – agree actions and make changes
4. Reflect – review what's working and what isn't



## 5. Make it Routine – embed wellbeing into everyday practices

A key resource is HSE's [Talking Toolkit](#), which helps employers hold structured conversations around six key stress factors: Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change.

"Prevention is better than cure," says Kayleigh Roberts, HSE's Work-Related Stress Policy Lead. "By acting proactively, employers can better protect employee wellbeing, reduce sickness absence and retain skilled, experienced staff."

### What employers can do this week

- Review your [stress risk assessment](#) – is it current and relevant to how your teams are working now?
- Use the [Talking Toolkit](#) – open up discussions around workload, pressures and support.
- Encourage learning – signpost the free Working Minds [online learning modules](#) for managers.
- Watch for early signs – like increased absence, reduced performance, or conflict – and act early.
- Normalise these conversations – treat them as part of your routine health and safety management.

**Taking simple, reasonable steps not only protects your employees – it helps you meet your legal obligations and build a healthier, more resilient workforce.**

### Share the message

Help spread awareness during Stress Awareness Week:

- Share Working Minds [posters and graphics](#) with your teams
- Talk about stress at team meetings and one-to-ones
- Encourage others to try the [free online learning](#)
- Use the [Stress Indicator Tool](#) to gather anonymous team feedback

Our campaign partner [Mind](#) shared the following reflection for Stress Awareness Week:

"Life can feel challenging for many of us, both in and outside of work. That's why it's so important that work doesn't add to the pressure. As a proud Working Minds partner, Mind is supporting employers and workers to prevent work-related stress and create mentally healthy workplaces." – Jonathan Stuart, Workplace Partnerships Lead at Mind

### Join the conversation

Follow and share the Working Minds campaign:

- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)