

# Company fined after reactor explosion

A Northwest manufacturing company has been fined after an explosion led to a reactor bursting open and ejecting a motor through a roof.

Fortunately, nobody was injured as a result of the incident, which happened at CatAlloy Limited based in Widnes on 3 December 2015, during the manufacture of nickel catalyst.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found how air drawn into the reactor mixed with hydrogen, causing overpressure that led to the explosion.

The lid of the reactor burst open and the gearbox and the electric drive motor, situated on top of it, were ejected through the roof of the building after breaking their mountings.

The investigation also found that a residual product had been left in the reactor – which can ignite when exposed to air.

At Liverpool Crown Court CatAlloy Limited of Moss Bank Road, Widnes, pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2 (1) and 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £120,000 and ordered to pay costs of £50,000

After the hearing HSE inspector Sean Bembridge said: “This incident could so easily have been avoided by implementing appropriate control measures and safe working practices.

“At all times during the activation process, a material risk to health and safety existed.

“The defendant had a duty to take measures to ensure that this risk was reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level.”

## **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. [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](http://legislation.gov.uk/)
3. Further guidance on how to avoid incidents such as this can be found at [Reducing error and influencing behaviour – HSG48 \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://Reducing_error_and_influencing_behaviour_-_HSG48_(hse.gov.uk)_/) / [Designing and operating safe chemical reaction processes – HSG143 \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://Designing_and_operating_safe_chemical_reaction_processes_-_HSG143_(hse.gov.uk))
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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## Motor's manufacturing company prosecuted after employee severs finger

An electric motors and gearbox manufacturer has been prosecuted after an employee's little finger was severed from her right hand.

On 16 September 2019 an employee of Parvalux Electric Motors Limited was injured at their Bournemouth site when she became entangled in an exposed rotating shaft during the final test of a running motor on the production line.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had not identified the risks to their employees from exposed rotating shafts and had not provided suitable guards or safe systems of working.

At Poole Magistrates Court on 8 September, Parvalux Electric Motors Limited of Wallisdown Road, Bournemouth, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety Work Act 1974. They were fined £60,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Francesca Arnold said: "The defendant failed to ensure the safety of its employees in the testing of electrical motors.

"This incident could so easily have been prevented by simply putting the correct control measures in place and establishing safe working practices; for example, guarding exposed rotating parts and providing 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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## [Death of a contractor – an update from HSE](#)

The investigation into the death of a maintenance contractor has been handed over to the Health and Safety Executive.

A 79 – year old man died on September 4 whilst carrying out track maintenance duties at Babbacombe Cliff Railway, Babbacombe, Downs Road, Torquay.

A joint investigation was launched with and led by Devon and Cornwall Police. Whilst inquiries continue, the Health Safety Executive (HSE) will now lead the investigation.

The criminal inquiry will determine if any breaches under the Health and Safety at Work Act have occurred.

HSE principal inspector Trevor Lowe said: “We will draw upon the evidence gathered so far to determine the cause of this tragic incident.

“During the investigation we will continue to keep in touch with the family of the deceased as we send them our deepest sympathies at this difficult time.”

Ends

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## [HSE launches inspection initiative targeting manufacturing sector](#)

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors have begun a targeted inspection initiative focusing on manufacturing businesses where materials that contain silica are used.

The inspections, which started on Monday (October 3), will check whether employers and workers know the risks involved when dealing with silica and ensure that businesses have control measures in place to protect workers' respiratory health. This will include brick and tile manufacturers, foundries, stone working sites and manufacturers of kitchen worktops.

Prolonged exposure to airborne particles of respirable crystalline silica (RCS) can lead to life-changing respiratory conditions such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer warns Britain's workplace regulator.

As part of the HSE's role as an enabling regulator it has recently refreshed its silica guidance for [brick and tile manufacturing](#), [stonework](#) and [foundries](#) and has an [ebulletin to support this industry](#). HSE also has advice for [employers and workers in manufacturing that use materials that contain silica](#).

Silica is a natural substance found in most stone, rocks, sand, quartz and clay. Silica particles are produced during many manufacturing tasks involving these materials. Silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer can all be caused by breathing in tiny particles of silica. Over time, exposure to silica particles can harm a worker's ability to breathe and cause irreversible, often fatal, lung disease.

Employers have a legal duty to put in place suitable arrangements to manage health and safety and ensure they comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH). Inspectors will be looking for evidence that businesses have put in place effective measures, such as Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), water suppression and where appropriate, use of protective equipment such as Respiratory Protective (RPE), to reduce workers exposure to the RCS. If any health and safety breaches are discovered, HSE will take enforcement action to make sure workers' health is protected.

HSE's Chief Medical Advisor, Professor David Fishwick explains more about silicosis in this [short video](#).

HSE's head of manufacturing David Butter said: *"It's hugely important for manufacturing businesses where workers use materials that contain silica to act now to ensure they comply with the law and protect their workers from the risks of devastating lung disease. Businesses should take note that that good ventilation in the workplace and protective equipment are just some of the measures they need in place to protect the respiratory health of workers.*

*"Ahead of our autumn/winter inspection campaign, we want employers and workers to make sure they are aware of the risks associated with the activities they do. For example brick and tile manufacture, foundry workers and stoneworkers where they cut and shape bricks, tiles and stone that can create RCS dust that could be breathed in. To assist them we have refreshed our guidance. In addition, we have committed to providing dutyholders with regular updates, information and advice through our ebuletin."*

To view the refreshed guidance visit:

- [Brick and tile silica – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Foundry – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Stoneworkers – COSHH e-tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

You can sign up for [regular updates on the silica campaign here](#). Follow the campaign on Twitter at @H\_S\_E or on Facebook @hsegovuk.

Ends

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1. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
1. The inspection programme will be supported by HSE's 'Work-Right' campaign, aimed to influence employer behaviour change.