

# HSE inspectors checking asbestos management

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) marks Global Asbestos Awareness Week (1–7 April), highlighting free guidance and training resources available to help dutyholders and trades comply with the law.
- HSE inspectors visiting premises and construction sites check that asbestos is being managed in compliance with the law and workers are kept safe.
- Regulator outlines three main areas businesses should look to improve.

To mark Global Asbestos Awareness Week (1–7 April), HSE is advising dutyholders to check they are compliant in areas that inspectors find need improving when visiting premises.

Building owners, landlords and tradespeople who fail to manage asbestos risks may face prosecution. The most common pitfalls found by inspectors are:

- asbestos management plans not in place to ensure the condition of asbestos-containing materials is routinely monitored
- information, instruction, and training provided for managing asbestos is inadequate
- procedures and arrangements to manage work liable to disturb known or presumed asbestos-containing materials need improving.

Nicholas James from HSE's engagement and policy division, said: "The law requires that asbestos in buildings is proactively managed and monitored. This means active monitoring – not a one-off check. The priorities are clear – accurate identification and assessment of asbestos-containing materials, robust procedures and arrangements for managing risk, ongoing active management and condition monitoring, effective communication and relevant training. Don't let poor management arrangements be the reason an inspector finds you failing."

HSE provides a host of free guidance and advice for dutyholders at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos).

HSE inspectors can visit premises without warning. Where management is found to be lacking, enforcement action is taken to require that appropriate asbestos risk management measures are put in place. Non-compliance can result in prosecution, fines and criminal records.

The legal duty to manage asbestos applies to a wide range of non-domestic and multi-occupancy premises – from offices, factories and shops to schools, hospitals and places of worship. It applies to building owners, landlords and those responsible for maintenance and repair.

Four steps every dutyholder must take:

- Arrange an asbestos survey, or review any existing ones

- Create a register and assess the risk
- Write an asbestos management plan
- Put the plan into action and keep it under review

When managed properly and in good condition, the risk from asbestos is low. Ensuring those that need to take actions understand how to keep asbestos-containing materials in buildings safe is critical for complying with the law.

When removal, refurbishment, maintenance or repair work is required, it needs to be carried out safely and in accordance with regulations. Workers in construction and building trades are at particular risk of disturbing asbestos. These workers should receive asbestos awareness training to help ensure they do not carry out tasks that could disturb asbestos, and any materials that may contain asbestos must be properly identified before work begins through a suitably intrusive refurbishment or demolition survey. All work on asbestos-containing materials requires specific training. Carrying out work without the correct training and controls is illegal.

A recent prosecution shows the consequences of getting it wrong. A site manager received a suspended prison sentence, a five-year director disqualification and an electronically monitored curfew after failing to use a licensed contractor to clear asbestos from a demolition site. The two companies involved were fined a combined £88,300 and ordered to pay over £9,000 in costs and surcharges.

HSE Inspector, Rob Gidman, said: "Asbestos is a Class 1 carcinogen which is known to kill around 20 tradespeople each week due to past exposure. By failing to ensure the demolition was properly planned and managed, considering the presence of asbestos on site, these companies and the site manager put workers and members of the public at risk of being exposed to a substance known to cause fatal lung disease.

"This case should serve as a reminder to those engaged in demolition and refurbishment work that they have responsibilities when it comes to managing the risks associated with asbestos."

### **Support is available**

- [Asbestos & You](#) – free practical guide for tradespeople
- [Asbestos: Your Duty](#) – guidance for building owners and landlords
- [Download the poster](#) as a quick reminder of what you need to do
- Find out what level of [training](#) your role requires at [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)

### **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. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) are available at [press.hse.gov.uk](http://press.hse.gov.uk).
3. Relevant guidance can be found at [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk): [Asbestos – HSE](#)

4. HSE's has two campaigns "[Asbestos and You](#)" and "[Asbestos Your Duty](#)" reminding tradespeople about the dangers of asbestos and the importance of working safely with it, also to reach those responsible for the maintenance and repair of non-domestic buildings.
  5. Global Asbestos Awareness Week runs from 1 to 7 April 2026.
  6. 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 relevant sentencing councils provides guidelines for health and safety offences for [England](#) and [Scotland](#) on their websites.
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## [Rotherham metal fabrication company sentenced after young apprentice injured during apprenticeship training](#)

- 17-year-old apprentice injured by a metal cutting guillotine
- An HSE investigation found a large gap in the bed of the guillotine that allowed access to dangerous parts of the machinery
- The company had failed to identify risk even after the incident had taken place

A Rotherham-based metal fabrication company has been sentenced after pleading guilty to health and safety failings that led to a young apprentice being injured by dangerous parts of a metal cutting guillotine during training.

On Friday 8 November 2024, a 17-year-old apprentice at MTL Advanced Ltd was cutting sheet metal in preparation for welding practice as part of their apprenticeship training. The guillotine was located within a dedicated Apprentice Training Workshop, where first-year apprentices learn and practise metal fabrication techniques before moving into the company's main manufacturing areas in their second and third years.

The apprentice made several successful cuts, but on the final cut their thumb came into contact with the machine's clamps, causing a crush injury.

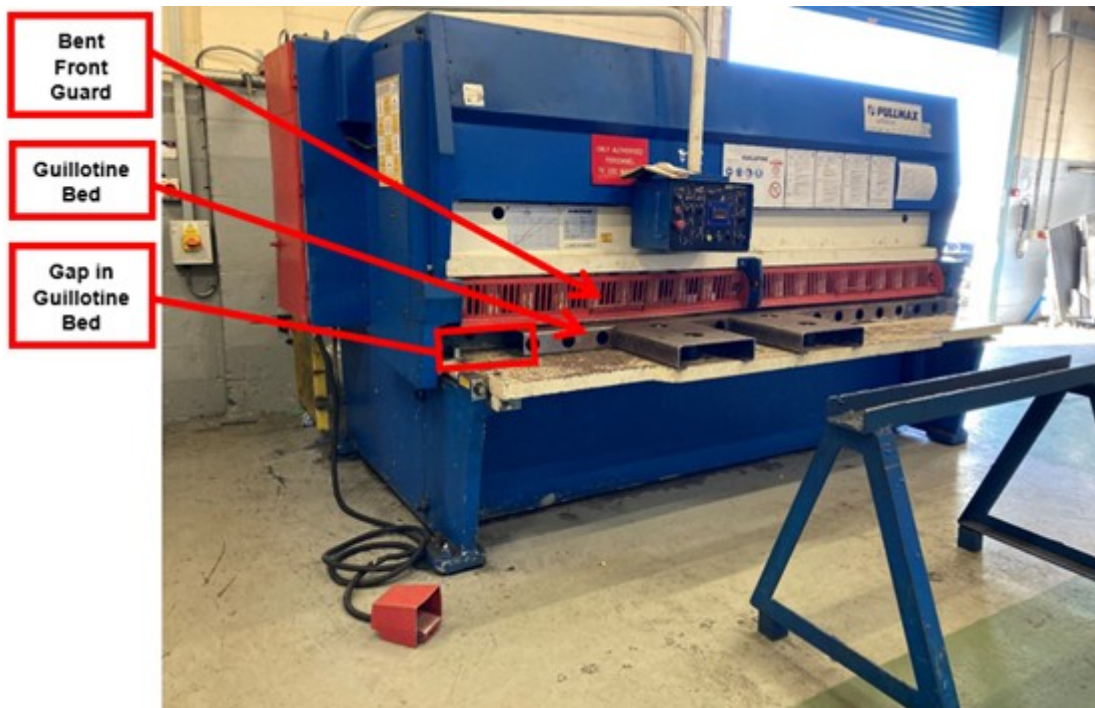


Image from site

The HSE launched an investigation and identified, from documents provided by the company before an on-site visit, that a large gap in the bed of the guillotine was allowing access to dangerous parts of the machinery. Critically, the company had failed to identify this risk even after the incident had taken place.

A Prohibition Notice was served remotely by HSE to control the ongoing risk. Following its service, HSE Inspectors attended the site and identified further issues with the guillotine requiring immediate remedy.

HSE provides extensive guidance on [managing risks in the workplace](#), including preventing access to dangerous parts of machinery and [employing young persons in training](#). Guidance notes that young people are likely to be new to the workplace and so are at more risk of injury in the first six months of a job, as they may be less aware of risks.

A wider inspection of the Apprentice Training Workshop revealed additional health and safety failings, including access to live electrical parts, further instances of unguarded dangerous machinery, and deficiencies in the system of inspection for workshop equipment.

MTL Advanced Ltd, of Britannia House, Junction Street, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 2RB, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined £140,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £5,013, with a Victim Surcharge of £2,000, at Sheffield Magistrates' Court.

**Speaking after the hearing, HM Principal Inspector of Health and Safety Chris Tilley said:** "Young people and apprentices are at the beginning of their career and so when it comes to workplace risks, employers must take particular care to assess those risks and fulfil their duty to keep them safe. Had this machinery been effectively guarded, this injury would never

have happened.”

HSE provides extensive guidance on managing workplace risks, including preventing access to dangerous parts of machinery and employing young people in training:

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward and Paralegal Officer Hannah Snelling.

### 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 [Managing risks and risk assessment at work: Overview – HSE](#)
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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## [Major builders merchant fined £2.2 million after worker killed in conveyor crush](#)

- Paul Coulson was crushed by a three-tonne pallet after another worker operated a conveyor not knowing he was inside
- Dangerous working practices had previously been captured on CCTV, but
- Company only made changes after Mr Coulson’s death.

One of the country’s largest building merchants has been fined more than £2 million after one of its workers was crushed to death by a pallet of timber that weighed around three tonnes.

Paul Coulson, 56, died after a colleague started a conveyor not realising Mr Coulson had climbed inside it – resulting in the fatal crush.



Mr Coulson was crushed by a pallet of timber that weighed around three tonnes

The incident happened on 22 May 2024 at Herringswell Sawmills, a site in Bury St Edmonds in Suffolk operated by Huws Gray Limited. Mr. Coulson, a labourer, had been tasked with removing plastic packaging from pallets of timber before they could be processed at the mill.

The 56-year had climbed within the framework of the conveyor to access some of the packaging. However, another operative, who could not see Mr Coulson from his location, started the conveyor. This resulted in the pack of timber moving forwards and colliding with him. The operative, who could see that the pack of timber was not moving along the conveyor as it should, reversed it before changing its direction. This resulted in the pack of timber moving forwards again – colliding with Mr Coulson for a second time. The crush injuries sustained were so significant that he died at the scene.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company – which provides supplies to the building trade from hundreds of sites across Great Britain – had previously identified that employees were accessing the danger zone within the conveyor and placed signage asking employees not to do so. However, CCTV analysis revealed that between 14 April and 23 May 2024, operatives entered within the framework of the conveyor on 19 different occasions.



The company did places stickers on the conveyor before the incident happened

Although the company had placed stickers on the conveyor in a bid to tackle the working practice, no further action was taken to prevent access until after the tragedy.

The measures subsequently introduced to reduce the risk included guarding the conveyor to prevent access, changing the system of work so that the pallets were unwrapped before being placed on the conveyor, as well as more CCTV being installed to allow all angles to be seen by those operating it.

Although standards of health and safety are much improved over recent years, sawmilling remains a high-risk industry. HSE guidance clearly identifies the risks. [Health and safety in sawmilling – HSE](#).

Accidents can happen when people enter dangerous parts of the machinery to carry out adjustments, clear blockages, or replenish consumables. Companies need to prevent access to the reciprocating carriage and associated machinery during normal operation. This can be achieved by having in place:

- fixed-distance guarding on the sides of the machinery;
- close guarding designed to meet the necessary reach distances;
- a combination of these or other suitable measures.

Huws Gray Limited based in Llangefni, Anglesey, Wales, pleaded guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Section 2(1). The company was fined £2.2 million and ordered to pay full costs at Chelmsford Magistrates Court on the 26 March 2026.

**HSE inspector Joanne Williams said:**

“This was a staggering failure that has cost a man his life and robbed a family of their loved one, and the scale of the fine handed down reflects the gravity of this case.

“All companies, regardless of their size, must follow the hierarchy of control for guarding dangerous parts within work equipment.

“Our investigation revealed that in this case, Huws Gray Ltd chose to control a serious risk through instruction alone – instead of putting proper safeguarding measures in place

“This meant employees were able to access a danger area, with tragic consequences.

“Had Huws Gray Ltd taken robust action when they became aware of the problem, Paul Coulson would be alive today.

“Our thoughts will always remain with his family and friends for the loss they have suffered.”

The case was taken by HSE Lawyer Edward Parton supported by paralegal, Mariea Slater.

## 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.
1. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
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3. Relevant HSE guidance can be found here:
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## [Plastics firm fined after two workers lose fingers in just ten days](#)

- Both incidents happened during ten-day period in August 2024.
- Two workers lost fingers in different pieces of machinery.
- One of them, a grandmother, had worked at the firm for 28 years.

A company in Leeds that produces plastic products has been fined after two of its workers lost fingers in machinery in separate incidents over the course of just ten days.

Commercial Lines Limited, trading as HLN Supplies, pleaded guilty to charges brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the two unrelated incidents in August 2024 – both caused by unsafe machinery.

The HSE investigation found the company hadn't put adequate guards on machinery, meaning dangerous parts were easily accessible. The first incident happened on 12 August, when Angela Morrison, a then 61-year-old grandmother, was attempting to clear a blockage on a sanding machine. The plastics fabricator reached into a ventilation port, and her hand came in contact with a large metal rotating disk, resulting in severe damage to the fingers on her right hand.

Mrs Morrison, who has eight grandchildren, and had worked for the company for 28 years, described how she was initially in shock and could not feel any pain, but was operated on within an hour of being rushed into hospital. Doctors needed to remove what was left of her middle finger, with another finger being seriously damaged – so much so, it will also now need to be

amputated.



Angela Morrison sustained serious injuries in the incident

*"They are also going to remove a portion of what is left of my middle finger to make it look better," she explained.*

*"I am naturally right-handed so everything is now much more difficult. You don't notice it until you go and do something and then you realise you can't. Little things like opening the oven or getting out change in my purse.*

*"My grandchildren were a bit afraid and squeamish of my injuries at first but they soon got used to it. There are things I can't do for them that I would like to, such as doing my granddaughter's hair.*

*"When I think about the accident, I just keep thinking 'if only it didn't happen' or if I'd done something differently. I just want to turn the clock back.*

*"I have been off work since, but my long-term hope is to get back to work, even if it's an office job."*



The sanding machine being used by Angela Morrison

Despite the wholly avoidable incident – it was only ten days later on 22 August, that another worker sustained serious injuries when his left hand came into contact with the blade of a table saw he was using to cut small strips of plastic. The 57-year-old lost part of the finger above the knuckle on his index finger and required surgery to remove the top of his middle finger several days later.

The HSE investigation found the company had failed to provide adequate guarding on the sanding machine, allowing dangerous parts to be easily accessible. Additionally, table saw training had been insufficient, and no safe work systems were in place when cutting small materials. The company also failed to have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment in place for the work being carried out.

Every year, there are a number of accidents from using work equipment, including machinery. Many are serious and some are fatal. HSE offers detailed guidance on work equipment and machinery – [Work equipment and machinery – HSE](#).

Commercial Lines Limited (T/A HLN Supplies), of Upper Accommodation Road, Leeds, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and section 3(1) The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 – They were fined £16,000 plus £6,534 in costs at Leeds Magistrates Court on 26 March 2026.

**HSE Inspector Gavin Carruthers said:**

“For this company to have not one but two completely avoidable incidents in such a short time shows systemic health and safety failings.

“Both workers have been left with injuries that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. The fact one of those hurt was a much-love grandmother who had worked at the company for nearly three decades makes these failings all the more stark.

“If proper guarding, training, and safe systems of work had been in place than these two workers would not have sustained such life-changing injuries.

“HSE will take action when companies fail in their duties to keep workers safe.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE Enforcement Lawyer Arfaq Nabi and paralegal officer Zara Salman

#### **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 – [Woodworking – HSE](#)
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 invites applications for new Chair of the Science Quality and Assurance Group](#)**

HSE is looking for an experienced scientist, engineer or analyst to Chair the Science Quality and Assurance Group (SQAG).

SQAG provides the HSE Board, HSE Chief Executive and Director of Science with robust external assurance of the science, engineering and analysis (SEA) work which underpins HSE’s decision making.

### **About the person**

We welcome applications from people who:

- are eminent in a scientific, engineering or analytical discipline, with evidence of national and/or international impact and demonstrable ability to work confidently across a wide range of relevant scientific disciplines

- have experience of working on expert committees or in an equivalent capacity, in trans-disciplinary teams, and are experienced in managing complex discussions
- are a skilled communicator who can provide leadership and direction
- have experience in leading and managing research programmes, and extensive experience working across the scientific community in a leadership role – it's expected that any technical experience will be at the applied end of the research landscape
- have a collaborative style and an aptitude for partnership working and an ability to engage with people in a respectful and inclusive way
- have a good understanding of the policy and regulatory context in which HSE works and knowledge of the role played by HSE in relation to other players in the health and safety system

## About the role

As the Chair of SQAG, your key responsibilities will include:

- leading the group to provide independent and objective assurance to the HSE Board and the HSE Director of Science on the quality, alignment and impact of HSE's SEA activities
- working with HSE's Director of Science to define the scope of work
- ensuring the group upholds standards and good governance in accordance with its terms of reference
- guiding discussions within the group towards shared conclusions while making sure that differing or minority views are captured and appropriately reflected
- representing the group within HSE and being the main point of contact between the group and HSE's Board and Director of Science
- presenting findings from the group's activities to HSE's Board

Duties as Chair of SQAG are expected to take in the region of 12 days per year. This would include chairing at least 2 meetings of the full group each year, attending at least 2 deep dives per year (each lasting up to two days) and covering SQAG related items at the HSE Board (virtually). SQAG related meetings will be held face-to-face, with the option for some hybrid meetings depending on the nature of the discussions.

## To apply

To apply send a brief CV and supporting letter to [hse.secretariat@hse.gov.uk](mailto:hse.secretariat@hse.gov.uk) quoting SQAG APPLICATION in the subject field.

Applications must be received by 12pm (midday) on Friday 17 April 2026. Receipt of applications will be acknowledged by email.

## Applicant pack

For full information on this opportunity please refer to the [Applicant pack for SQAG Chair](#). Please note that the applicants pack sets out the assessment criteria.