

# Man sentenced after illegal gas work put family at risk

- Unqualified gas work led to three potentially dangerous gas leaks at family home.
- Property left without heating or hot water for six weeks.
- Man sentenced to 200 hours' unpaid work and £2,000 costs.

A man has been sentenced after his illegal gas work put the lives of an Ulverston family at risk.



Lee Lancaster carrying out illegal gas work

Lee Lancaster, 38, installed a gas combi boiler and gas pipework at a family home in in February 2024. After completing the work, one of the occupiers smelled gas near their meter box. They contacted Cadent, who identified three different gas leaks. As a result, the gas supply to the house was shut off for six weeks, leaving the family of four without heating or hot water.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was alerted to the incident by Gas Safe following their inspection, which classified the work carried out as Immediately Dangerous. A subsequent investigation by HSE discovered that Mr Lancaster did not hold any qualifications in relation to gas work and was not competent to undertake such work safely. It also identified that he was not on the Gas Safe Register; the official list of gas engineers who are qualified to work legally on gas installations.



The meter box following the gas supply being capped

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 require those undertaking gas work to be Gas Safe registered and to hold the relevant qualifications to demonstrate their competence.

Members of the public are reminded that all gas work must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Anyone can check whether an engineer is registered by visiting [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) or calling 0800 408 5500.

Carrying out gas work without registration is illegal and potentially dangerous, as unqualified work can lead to gas leaks, fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Lee Lancaster, of New Market Street, Ulverston, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 3(1) and 3(3) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. He was sentenced to a 12-month community order where he must undertake 200 hours of unpaid work and was ordered to pay £2,000 costs at a hearing at Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court on 23 January 2026.

**After the hearing, HSE Inspector Matthew Shepherd said:**

"The risks from uncontrolled gas leaks are well known and can be fatal.

"Mr Lancaster knew he was unqualified and not Gas Safe registered yet still took on this work, putting a family in very real danger.

"We will not hesitate to take action against anyone undertaking gas work where they are not competent or registered to do so."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward and paralegal officer Lynne Thomas.

**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: [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)
  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](#).
- 

## **Maintenance company fined £400,000 after worker dies from toxic glue exposure**

A housing association maintenance company has been fined £400,000 after an employee died from inhaling toxic vapours from flooring adhesive.

Darren Nevill, 38, was working for Connect Property Services Limited laying a vinyl bathroom floor at a domestic property in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire on 9 December 2020.

His employer purchased an adhesive containing Dichloromethane (DCM), a highly volatile solvent. Small volumes will give off large amounts of colourless, low odour vapour, even at room temperature. He used this regularly during his employment.

On the day of his death, the hose to the pressurised glue canister became damaged, releasing a large amount of adhesive into the poorly ventilated bathroom. Mr Nevill lost consciousness and collapsed. Emergency services had to force entry to the bathroom to reach him.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Connect Property Services Limited, of Ealing Gateway, 26-30 Uxbridge Road, London, had failed to take appropriate precautions to ensure substances hazardous to health are not used when safer alternatives are available.

HSE guidance on [Dichloromethane \(DCM\)](#) states to avoid the use of DCM-based products whenever reasonably practicable, by using suitable and safer alternative products or methods. DCM-based products should only be used in well-ventilated areas, to prevent the build-up of vapour. Examples of poorly ventilated areas can include bathrooms, cellars, stairwells and sheeted enclosures.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. At Stevenage Magistrates Court on 26 January 2026, Connect Property Services Limited was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £9676.81 with a surcharge of £190.

Prosecutor Jon Mack told the court “HSE scientists calculated that the statutory 15-minute exposure limit for DCM would have been reached within 2-13 seconds, and the final concentration in the bathroom at the time of Mr Nevill’s death would have been 84.5 times the exposure limit. Mr Nevill was found to have three times the fatal concentration of DCM.”

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Rauf Ahmed said: “Our thoughts today are with the family of Mr Nevill, who was just setting out on his career in construction. He should have returned home safely to his family at the end of his working day but, because of the failings of Connect Property Services Limited, he did not.”

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains and paralegal officer Helen Jacob.

### 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 [Dichloromethane \(DCM\) – COSHH – 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](#).

---

## [Company fined after 3-year-old nearly drowned at children’s holiday camp](#)

- Three-year-old girl found unconscious during swimming pool free-play session.
- Child became trapped beneath large float during holiday camp activity.
- HSE investigation found inadequate safety documentation and communication.

A company that runs holiday camps for children across the country has been fined £6,000 after a three-year-old girl nearly drowned during a swimming pool free-play session.

The incident occurred on 26 July 2023 at Bishopsgate School in Egham, Surrey, where Oxford Active Ltd was running a holiday camp. The three-year-old girl was found face down in the swimming pool underneath a large float and was not breathing. Staff intervened and were able to resuscitate her.



The float involved

The girl was part of a group of 19 children aged between three and five who were taking part in a free-play swimming session. Most of the children were non-swimmers, including the three-year-old. Staff had fitted her with two sets of armbands and provided her with a foam noodle before she entered the pool. A number of floats were present in the pool, including a large rocket-shaped float, beneath which the child became trapped. When she was found unconscious, she was no longer wearing the armbands or using the noodle.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Oxford Active Ltd's documentation relating to pool safety and supervision was insufficiently detailed and lacked clarity. The investigation also found that the content of this documentation was not communicated effectively to staff, meaning appropriate control measures were not properly understood or implemented.

HSE guidance on [swimming pool management](#) highlights the importance of effective supervision arrangements, particularly where young or non-swimming children are involved. This includes ensuring suitable adult-to-child ratios, clear rules on the use of floats and inflatable equipment, robust risk assessments for free-play sessions, and effective emergency procedures so incidents can be identified and responded to immediately.

Oxford Active Ltd, of Oxford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £12,000 in costs at a hearing at Chichester Magistrates'

Court. A victim surcharge was also applied, amounting to forty percent of the fine, capped at £2,000. In addition, £2,000 compensation was awarded to the child's family.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Russell Beckett said:

"It is vital that children are able to learn to swim in a safe environment and that parents can trust their children will be properly looked after while doing so.

"Fortunately, the three-year-old child recovered well, but this incident could very easily have had a tragic outcome."

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer, Neenu Bains and paralegal officer, Farhat Basir.

#### **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: [Swimming pool management: Leisure activities](#)
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](#).

---

## **Company fined after 3-year-old nearly drowned at children's holiday camp**

- Three-year-old girl found unconscious during swimming pool free-play session.
- Child became trapped beneath large float during holiday camp activity.
- HSE investigation found inadequate safety documentation and communication.

A company that runs holiday camps for children across the country has been fined £6,000 after a three-year-old girl nearly drowned during a swimming pool free-play session.

The incident occurred on 26 July 2023 at Bishopsgate School in Egham, Surrey, where Oxford Active Ltd was running a holiday camp. The three-year-old girl



was found face down in the swimming pool underneath a large float and was not breathing. Staff intervened and were able to resuscitate her.



The float involved

The girl was part of a group of 19 children aged between three and five who were taking part in a free-play swimming session. Most of the children were non-swimmers, including the three-year-old. Staff had fitted her with two sets of armbands and provided her with a foam noodle before she entered the pool. A number of floats were present in the pool, including a large rocket-shaped float, beneath which the child became trapped. When she was found unconscious, she was no longer wearing the armbands or using the noodle.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Oxford Active Ltd's documentation relating to pool safety and supervision was insufficiently detailed and lacked clarity. The investigation also found that the content of this documentation was not communicated effectively to staff, meaning appropriate control measures were not properly understood or implemented.

HSE guidance on [swimming pool management](#) highlights the importance of effective supervision arrangements, particularly where young or non-swimming children are involved. This includes ensuring suitable adult-to-child ratios, clear rules on the use of floats and inflatable equipment, robust risk assessments for free-play sessions, and effective emergency procedures so incidents can be identified and responded to immediately.

Oxford Active Ltd, of Oxford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £12,000 in costs at a hearing at Chichester Magistrates' Court. A victim surcharge was also applied, amounting to forty percent of the fine, capped at £2,000. In addition, £2,000 compensation was awarded to the child's family.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Russell Beckett said:

"It is vital that children are able to learn to swim in a safe environment

and that parents can trust their children will be properly looked after while doing so.

“Fortunately, the three-year-old child recovered well, but this incident could very easily have had a tragic outcome.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer, Neenu Bains and paralegal officer, Farhat Basir.

**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: [Swimming pool management: Leisure activities](#)
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](#).

---

## **Major chemical firm hit with £400,000 fine after dangerous steam release**

A global chemicals company has been fined £400,000 after a worker narrowly escaped serious injury in a high-pressure steam release incident at its site in Huddersfield.

Syngenta Ltd was sentenced after the 59-year-old contractor – working under its control and direction – had been carrying out unsafe maintenance work. The man had been working as a mechanical fitter on 6 November 2023 when the incident took place, resulting in the company reporting it to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as a dangerous occurrence. The incident involved a release of high-pressure steam as he went about his job.

The company operates a large agrichemicals production site where some of the production plants rely on high pressure steam to manufacture products. The HSE investigation found that the incident occurred during the planned replacement of a faulty steam trap on small-bore pipework.

Steam traps are devices that automatically remove condensate (water) and air from the high-pressure steam system. There was a sudden failure of the valve



used to isolate the work location from the steam, and this resulted in the uncontrolled high-pressure release.

The HSE investigation also revealed several failures with the system of work in operation. These included:

- The isolation valve failed when the mechanical fitter was separating a bolted flange by cutting the bolts using a battery powered reciprocating saw.
- The isolation valve and flange bolts were affected by corrosion and were in a poor condition.
- Due to widespread corrosion of flange bolts on the steam distribution system, it was considered necessary to routinely cut bolts rather than unscrew them using a spanner.
- Cutting flange bolts reduces the ability to control any unexpected, trapped material or pressure remaining in the pipework.

Syngenta Ltd pleaded guilty to having failed to ensure that the isolation valve and flange bolts were maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair – as required by Regulation 5(1) of the [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\) – HSE](#).

In addition, there was an issue with the company's documented risk assessment procedure in place before such maintenance work was undertaken. It was routine for Syngenta to carry out maintenance work on small-bore pipework of the high-pressure steam distribution system, using a single method of isolation.

HSE's published guidance about on this subject ([The safe isolation of plant and equipment – HSE](#), HSG253) emphasizes that using a method of double isolation is safer. The risk assessment documents in place failed to appreciate the increased risk involved in relying on a single method of isolation when there was known corrosion of the work equipment. Syngenta Ltd also pleaded guilty to having failed to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk involved in carrying out the specific maintenance work described as required by Regulation 3(1) of the [The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#).

Syngenta Ltd, whose head office is at Bracknell, Berkshire pleaded guilty to the two offences at Leeds Magistrates' Court on 28 January 2026 and was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,288.

HSE Inspector David Welsh said: "If a safe system of work had been in place at the site when the maintenance was being carried out, this dangerous incident would not have happened.

"The company did not appreciate the extent of the risk posed because of the way the maintenance work was being done, and the relatively simple control measures that could have been applied to make it safer.

"Syngenta not only failed produce an appropriate risk assessment, but also failed to maintain work equipment in a safe condition – which taken together

meant that this was a dangerous accident waiting to happen.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Iain Jordan 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: [The safe isolation of plant and equipment – 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](#).