

Mechanics warned of the life-threatening dangers of working under vehicles

- Twenty-one workers in motor vehicle repair industry killed in last five years, HSE figures show.
- More than half of these deaths (13) were caused when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported.
- Mechanics urged to challenge "this will only take me a minute" culture.
- Classic Motor Cars Ltd supports HSE's call for better safety with motor vehicles.

Leading voices in motor vehicle repair have teamed up with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to warn of the dangers of working under vehicles without proper equipment.

Figures recorded by HSE in the five years up to March 2022 show that 13 workers in the motor vehicle repair industry were killed when work took place under a vehicle that wasn't properly supported. Since April 2022, HSE has become aware of another four cases of workers being crushed to death by an incorrectly supported vehicle.

Leslie House, 61, was working outside his home in Dorset in May 2020 when he was crushed to death by the Land Rover Freelander he was underneath, which had rolled off the wooden blocks Les used to prop it up.



Leslie House, with his dog Ebby

Les was a self-employed agricultural engineer, repairing the car for a customer, and was only months from retirement. He was pronounced dead at the scene by the emergency services.

Official and anecdotal reports of a wide range of working practices gone wrong are leading to fears mechanics and enthusiasts are putting their lives in danger routinely.

HSE has guidance on [working safely under motor vehicles](#) being repaired and has also issued a safety alert for [air suspension systems on vehicles](#).

Classic Motor Cars (CMC), experts in classic car restoration with their own dedicated workshop, are supporting HSE's call to the industry.

"I am saddened but not surprised to hear of these tragedies," said Tim Griffin, Production and Engineering Director at CMC.

"The situation could get worse as people and businesses may cut costs with higher energy bills", said Tim, who oversees a team of experienced engineers and technicians. "My plea is that it's never a good time to cut corners – the stakes are too high."

Fiona McGarry, an HSE inspector who works with the motor vehicle repair trade said: "One death is too many – to us, these tragedies could easily have been avoided, but they keep happening. Sadly, the phrase we hear too often is 'this will only take me a minute'. It is crucial the correct equipment is used when working under vehicles."



HSE's Fiona McGarry

The annual death rate in the motor vehicle repair industry is 1.62 deaths per 100,000 workers – around four times the average rate across all industries. In total, 21 workers in the motor vehicle repair industry have been killed in the last five years – 13 of which were caused by work under a poorly supported vehicle.

As Britain's workplace regulator, HSE is officially notified of work-related

fatal and certain non-fatal accidents across England, Scotland and Wales. Alongside the 13 deaths, there are many more non-fatal injuries and near misses following work under poorly supported vehicles.

Fiona McGarry continued: "While our figures relate specifically to motor vehicle repair, work on vehicles happens across industries including transportation and agriculture. We all need to ensure work on vehicles is carried out safely, regardless of sector.

"We are becoming increasingly concerned about the scale of the issue. Failure to learn from near misses or injuries will risk lives.

"Some of these issues relate to smaller garages – places that are hard to reach. We have always had a strong relationship with the motor vehicle repair sector, and we respect the expertise of these small businesses.

"But as the issue has persisted, we needed to raise awareness of the issue together. It is therefore important CMC and the Garage Equipment Association are encouraging everyone who works on vehicles – at work, or at home – to check HSE's guidance.

"There are simple control measures which can avoid tragic cases like that of Les House."

Julian Woods, CEO of the Garage Equipment Association said: "We consider health and safety to be of the upmost importance to our industry and any loss of life should be considered an unacceptable situation.

"We drive to improve health and safety not only for our members but in the industry as a whole. It's all too easy to think it will never happen to me or it will only take a second to sort, so skip safety items to get the job done quickly, but these statistics are unacceptable.

"We all need to be thinking of not only ourselves but everybody's health and safety. If we see an unsafe act we should raise it up and not just turn a blind eye and keep walking."

HSE's advice to the trade:

Never work beneath a vehicle that is only supported on jacks:

- Use axle stands that are in good condition and inspected every year
- Use stands on firm, level ground and securely located under a strong point on the vehicle
- Securely chock wheels remaining on the ground
- Do not exceed the rated capacity of the stand

Never work beneath a cab or tipping trailer unless it is propped:

- Always prop cabs, trailers etc that could drop under their own weight
- The prop should be locked in position before gaining access
- If there is no prop fitted, or if one is fitted but you are unsure it will be effective, provide your own

Never crawl beneath a vehicle fitted with air suspension unless it is properly supported:

- Prevent movement of air suspension, either by using suitably rated props or stands to prevent the chassis lowering or by deflating the system
- Don't tamper with the ride height for the purpose of recovery or repair

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. Based in Shropshire, [Classic Motor Cars](#) provide customers with a range of services from full nut and bolt restorations to storage. The company workshops cover over 40,000 sq. ft, with highly trained team members, all keen to provide their expert assistance. From spare parts and routine servicing to full restorations, the company has been trusted with the country's most prestigious vehicles.

[Bupa Care Homes fined £400k after falling tree crushes child](#)

A care home provider has been fined £400k after an eight-year-old girl suffered catastrophic injuries when a tree fell on her.

Bupa Care Homes (CFHCare) Limited pleaded guilty after it [failed to provide a system to manage trees](#) on its site at Oak Lodge Care Home in Bitterne, Southampton.

West Hampshire Magistrates Court heard that on 8 July 2021, the girl was out for an evening jog with her father. As she was running on a pavement outside

the entrance to the care home, a lime tree fell on her. She suffered serious crush injuries and her leg had to be amputated. It was subsequently found that the tree was diseased with a common fungus and had likely been rotting for several years prior to the accident.



The lime tree fell on the girl as she was running along a pavement outside the entrance to the care home (HSE)

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that, over a number of years, Bupa Care Homes had failed to have in place a strategy to manage trees, including adequate risk assessment, proactive surveys, inspections, and monitoring of trees, to identify where remedial work may have been required to prevent risk of the tree falling.



The lime tree fell on the girl as she was running along a pavement outside the entrance to the care home (HSE)

Bupa Care Homes pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and received a fine of £400,000. The company was also ordered to pay costs of £3,275 and a victim surcharge.

HSE Inspector Natalie Pomfret said: "This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of the company to have in place suitable arrangements for managing trees on their premises, and failure to ensure that the trees were properly inspected and maintained."

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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. Guidance about managing the risk from [falling trees](#) is available.
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[Wine company fined £800k after HGV driver killed at Salford depot](#)

A wine and drinks supplier has been fined after a visiting HGV driver was killed after being hit by a forklift truck at its depot in Salford.

John Fitzpatrick was waiting for his trailer to be loaded at Kingsland Drinks Ltd in Irlam on 19 August 2020 when tragedy struck. The 59-year-old, from Oldham, suffered serious head injuries in the incident and died in hospital having never regained consciousness.



A still from the CCTV at the Kingsland Drinks depot in Irlam (HSE)

In a victim personal statement read out at Manchester Magistrates Court, his partner Paula Fitzpatrick, said how his death had affected their family.

"I cannot really explain what we have lost without describing the kind of person John was," she said.

"John was a joyful character, full of life, and often described as the life and soul of the party.

“He would talk to anyone and I would often lose him for a couple of hours when he went to the local shop as he would be talking to all the neighbours on the way.

“He was that kind of person – a very hardworking man who would do all the DIY around the house and that included all the family’s odd-jobs.

“At the time of his death, we were planning how our future would look.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company had failed in a number of areas. The risk assessment was out of date and not fit for purpose, and there was no pedestrian and [vehicle segregation in place in the loading area](#). Visiting drivers were not given clear information about site safety.

At a sentencing hearing at Manchester Magistrates’ Court on 25 January, Kingsland Drinks Ltd of The Winery, Fairhills Road, Irlam, Manchester, pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act. They were fined £800,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,614.30.

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Sharon Butler said: “This death would have been prevented if clear controls had been in place for visiting drivers.

“Companies who have loading areas need to provide information and instructions to visiting drivers and have clear segregation in place to ensure the site is safe for all who use it.

“Easy steps can be taken to reduce the risk of visiting drivers becoming injured on site.”

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 3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
 1. Full guidance on [workplace transport](#) is available.
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Building firm fined for multiple failings that included workers being lifted by a digger

A building firm has been fined for a catalogue of health and safety failings that included two builders being lifted into the air by a digger.

A photograph caught the moment a pair of workers stood in the bucket of a digger to fit a stone into the top of a new home in Littleborough, Greater Manchester.

It was one of a number of health and safety failings found during construction work at The Villas development on Starring Road in Littleborough.



Workers standing in the bucket of a digger during construction work at The Villas

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors visited the housing development on 7 July 2021 and issued Hoyle Developments Limited, the site's principal

contractor, with a Prohibition Notice for inadequate scaffolding and Improvement Notices for a lack of welfare facilities and insecure fencing.

HSE inspectors had visited the same housing development site four times between November 2018 and August 2021. Repeated breaches were found including a lack of sufficient welfare, unsuitable controls for work at height and inadequate protection from silica dust exposure. Hoyle Developments Limited was served with multiple Notifications of Contraventions, Prohibition Notices and Improvement Notices.

Hoyle Developments Limited, of Edenfield Road, Rochdale pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay £3,165.15 in costs at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 25 January 2023.

HSE inspector Mike Lisle said: "This proactive prosecution demonstrates that HSE will not hesitate to take proactive enforcement action against those that continuously fall below the required standards and demonstrate persistent poor health and safety. Health and safety should be an integral part of any business, not an afterthought, and having a clear health and safety policy and construction phase plan in place, before work commences, can assist with ensuring this."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: Construction -health and safety for the construction industry (hse.gov.uk)
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Company fined after worker seriously injures hand

A company has been fined after a worker's hand was pulled into a large drill causing serious injury.

The aircraft fitter, who worked for GE Aviation Systems Limited, was using the unguarded drill at the firm's former site on Kings Avenue, Hamble, Hampshire on 3 November 2019.

While using the drill on the frame of a small plane, the worker's left hand was caught by metal debris and then became entangled around the drill. The worker was only able to stop the drill by reaching with his free hand to detach the airline.

The worker sustained injuries to his left hand, including ligament and tendon damage as well as deep lacerations.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found GE Aviation Systems Limited, a manufacturer of components for commercial and military aircraft, had failed to provide a guard stopping workers from being exposed to the drill's rotating shaft. The company also failed to introduce an emergency stop system to halt the drill.

In a victim impact statement presented to the court, the worker said: "I have been left with disfigured fingers. They will never go straight again and will always be bent. I had my original wedding ring cut off after the accident as my fingers doubled in size due to the swelling. I now have to wear a resized ring due to injuries.



The worker's hand following the incident.

"The injury to my hand has affected my grip strength. I find it difficult sometimes to hold bottles and cans and I am unable to hold tools for long periods at work. I have to take regular breaks to give my hand a rest when previously I would have carried on through. I also find that my fingers stiffen up if I have to use tools for a prolonged time.

"I generally struggle with tasks where I have to grip anything for a prolonged period of time. This is all improving with time, but progress is

slow. The accident knocked my confidence and I was hesitant about returning to that process. I found myself being overly cautious for a while until I was about to build my confidence back up.

“The injuries sustained in the accident continue to have an effect on my day-to-day life. I am learning to manage with it as I go along.”

GE Aviation Systems Limited, of Cheltenham Road, Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham pleaded guilty to breaching Provision and Use of Work Equipment (PUWER) 1998 Regulations 8 (1), 11 (1) & 16 (1). The company was fined £76,000 and ordered to pay £10,525 in costs at West Hampshire Magistrates’ Court on 25 January 2023.

HSE inspector Rebecca Lumb said: “The risk of entanglement around a rotating shaft is a known and well-documented machinery risk and yet wholly-preventable incidents on unguarded rotating machinery remain far too common. Employers should carry out assessment of machinery risks to ensure they are guarded appropriately to ensure that life-changing injuries, such as this, do not occur.

“The fitting of emergency stop devices (where appropriate) is a defined duty within PUWER 1998; in many instances, retro-fitting them to existing machinery is reasonably practicable for employers to ensure legacy equipment is safeguarded to current standards.

“Employers should also ensure that adequate information and instruction is provided to all who use work equipment, including full consideration of when it is appropriate to use personal protective equipment.”

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