

Building firm fined after workers were put at risk during warehouse renovation, and for breaching Prohibition Notice

A building firm has been fined after putting workers working at height at risk during the refurbishment of a former warehouse building in London and for breaching a Prohibition Notice.

Shiva Ltd, a property investment company, were using a site-made cradle during the renovation of the five-story building on Bermondsey Street in the south-east of the capital.

Cradles are temporary suspended work access platforms widely used in the construction industry, which are commonly suspended from cables and raised and lowered into position by winches.

However, Westminster Magistrates' Court heard that on and before 26 February 2019, the company put operatives at risk of falling from height while unsafely refurbishing the front façade of the building.

Despite being served with a prohibition notice by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) the company continued the work the following day.

An investigation by the HSE found that workers were at significant risk of falling from height by manually lifting the cradle from the open edge of the roof and working from height near unprotected openings; and that the work was not appropriately supervised. The company also obstructed justice by refusing to allow the HSE inspector access to the site.

As such, Shiva Ltd failed to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of those carrying out the work.

On 10 October Shiva Ltd of Lincoln Tower, Westminster Bridge Road, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and breaching the Prohibition Notice. They were fined £46,000 and ordered to pay costs of £24,688.10.

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Sharon Boyd said: "Inspectors will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against dutyholders who fall below the required standards and put lives at risk.

"Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. In 2021/22, falls from height accounted for 29 fatal injuries in the workplace."

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. www.hse.gov.uk
 2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
 3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
 4. Further guidance can be found at: [Working at height: A brief guide \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk/working-at-height/)
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Contractor fined after unsafe work leaves food factory employee seriously injured



Contractor Bedford Transmissions Limited has been fined after a man fell from height and was seriously injured at a food factory.

Bedford Transmissions Limited, trading as BT Lerson, had been contracted by Veetee Rice to move and replace machinery within their factory in Rochester.

On 17 August 2020, an employee of Veetee Rice, stood on an unsecured metal plate left in place by BT Lerson the evening before and fell a height of approximately 2.5metres.

The employee's spine and pelvis were damaged in several places which required

a lengthy stay in hospital and meant that he was unable to return to work for several months.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that BT Lerson did not properly plan, appropriately supervise, or ensure that the work was carried out safely. BT Lerson failed to identify the fall from height risk and necessary controls in their planning and did not take account of Veetee Rice's employees who were working in the area.

In the lead up to the incident, BT Lerson worked over the top of the hole where the employee of Veetee Rice fell, with no suitable measures to prevent falls of their own workers. BT Lerson then left the factory site with 2 unsecured aluminium plates covering the 2.5 metre drop with only plastic barrier tape marking the area.

That night, the employee was cleaning the work area when he stood on the unsecured metal plates and fell through.

At Folkestone Magistrates' Court on October 10, Bedford Transmissions Limited pleaded guilty for a breach of Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. They were fined £8,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,194.32.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Peter Bruce said: "This incident could have easily been avoided if Bedford Transmissions had properly supervised and planned this work, to ensure that the work was carried out so far as is reasonably practicable safely.

"Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. In 2021/22, falls from height accounted for 29 fatal injuries in the workplace.

"It is important that companies properly plan the work they are undertaking at height putting in place measures to protect their own employees as well as others who have access to their work area. It is also important that, when working at an external premise, employers work together and communicate how a site will be left and whether additional measures are needed."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/735/contents/made>
3. Guidance related to topics in this case can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg159.pdf>, <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l24.pdf> and <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>.

World Mental Health Day: Supporting staff must be a priority for employers

- Workplace regulator HSE offers free advice for employers to help protect mental health
- 17 million working days are lost due to stress, anxiety, or depression every year in Great Britain
- Tackling this could bring economic benefits
- Reminder comes on World Mental Health Day (Monday October 10)

Good mental health in the workplace must be a priority for employers.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) believes supporting staff wellbeing is not only the right thing for bosses to do but could also benefit Britain's economy.

The workplace regulator is reminding employers of the importance of mental health support on International Mental Health Day (Monday October 10).

HSE offers free advice for employers on supporting their staff's mental health through its Working Minds campaign, which is aimed at addressing the impact of work-related stress.

Around 17 million working days are lost due to stress, anxiety, or depression every year in Great Britain. Stress is thought to be responsible for almost half of working days lost. Research by HSE found of the people suffering from a work-related illness in Britain, 822,000 were reporting signs of work-related stress, depression, or anxiety.

Reducing this will not only help people lead happier lives but could also have significant economic benefits at a time when attention is focused on growing the economy.

HSE says a supportive working environment can improve productivity and performance, and workers are more likely to stay with an employer that prioritises good mental health. A report found evidence that UK bosses will receive an average return of £5 for every £1 spent on mental health.

Events are taking place today (Monday October 10) to mark International Mental Health Day; a global event organised by the World Health Organisation to protect and improve mental health across the world.

HSE's Working Minds campaign aims to help businesses recognise the signs of work-related stress and make tackling issues routine. The campaign was launched after research showed mental health issues are the number one reason

given for sick days in Great Britain.

Employers have a responsibility to assess and act on the risks in the workplace, not just in terms of physical safety but also mental health.

Sarah Albon, chief executive of HSE, said: "World Mental Health Day is a good opportunity for employers to check they have the right support in place for their staff when it comes to mental health. Taking action to improve workplace mental health not only benefits individuals, but also supports business growth and productivity. Employers should have an open environment where staff can share concerns and discuss options to ease pressures they face."

[A recent survey from Deloitte](#) suggests one in six workers experience a mental health problem at any one time and that the total annual cost of poor mental health to employers has increased by 25% since 2019, costing UK employers up to £56 billion a year. Deloitte's findings also suggest that UK bosses will receive an average return of £5 for every £1 spent on mental health.

Guidance on how businesses can spot the signs of work-related stress and prevent issues before they become a problem can be found through HSE's Working Minds campaign:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

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2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. The Working Minds campaign is supported by Mind, Lifelines Scotland, NHS, ACAS, Mates in Mind, the Farm Safety Foundation, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Plastics and Composites Group, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, CONIAC and the UK Home Care Association.
4. Information about World Mental Health Day can be found here: [World Mental Health Day 2022 \(who.int\)](#)

[Scientist who played a key role in the pandemic response is appointed chair](#)

of a new HSE committee



Cath Noakes, picture courtesy of Leeds University

A leading scientist who played an important role in Britain's response to the pandemic has been appointed chair of a new science committee.

Professor Cath Noakes led a sub-group of SAGE (UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) during the COVID-19 crisis. She will now chair a new committee that will offer assurance to Great Britain's workplace regulator the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Professor Noakes, who is professor of Environmental Engineering for Buildings at the University of Leeds, has a background in ventilation, air quality, and infection control.

She will lead the new Science Quality Assurance Group (SQAG) at HSE, which will provide the workplace regulator with independent assurance on the relevance and quality of its scientific research. The advisory group will ensure important research into workplace health and safety is relevant, robust, and fit for the future.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Noakes co-chaired the Environment and Modelling sub-group for SAGE. She also advised the NHS, the World Health Organisation and several government departments. She was awarded an OBE for her services to the pandemic in 2020.

Professor Cath Noakes said: "It's a real honour to be appointed to this role as chair of a new committee that I believe can play an important part in ensuring science-based evidence used to protect people and places is of the highest quality.

"I have had the pleasure of seeing at first hand HSE's scientific expertise being put to full use during the pandemic ranging from fundamental studies on transmission through to the production of information videos on ventilation that helped inform workplaces of good practice in stopping the spread of the virus.

"External experts drawn from relevant science and engineering disciplines, who are recognised as leaders in their fields, will now be asked to join the

group which I'm privileged to lead."

Chair of HSE, Sarah Newton, added: "Professor Noakes brings with her a wealth of scientific experience and her expertise and knowledge is a perfect fit as chair of our new committee.

"The newly formed Science Quality Assurance Group will consider how science and evidence delivered by HSE helps to maintain Great Britain's record as one of the safest countries to work in while supporting our 10-year strategy. We look forward to working with the group and welcome Cath as chair."

The Science Quality Assurance Group will have 12 members who will be independent, external experts drawn from relevant science and engineering disciplines. Members will be organised into four subgroups. Each subgroup will review scientific research carried out to support one or more of HSE's strategic objectives in detail.

The four subgroups will be:

- Health and Safety
- Net Zero
- Chemicals Safety
- Buildings Safety

HSE is currently inviting applications for Independent Members of its new Science Quality Assurance Group (SQAG). To find out more click [here](#).

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Cath Noakes background information:

Professor Noakes is a chartered mechanical engineer, with a background in fluid dynamics. Her expertise is in building physics and environmental engineering, and she has led research into ventilation, indoor air quality and infection control in the built environment.

She joined the School of Civil Engineering at University of Leeds in 2002 as a postdoctoral researcher modelling air disinfection systems and was later appointed as a lecturer in 2007 and then promoted to Reader in 2010 and Chair in 2014.

Professor Noakes was Director of the Pathogen Control Engineering (PACE) research institute 2010-2014, and Director of Research and Innovation for the School of Civil Engineering 2014-2020. She is currently Deputy Director of Leeds Institute for Fluid Dynamics and Co-Director for the EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Fluid Dynamics.

During the COVID-19 pandemic she co-chaired the Environment and Modelling sub-group for the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and contributed to multiple advisory groups and initiatives through IMechE, CIBSE, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Academy of Medical Sciences, WHO, the NHS and several government departments.

She was Faculty of Engineering Athena Swan Lead 2014-2017 and led a successful Silver Athena Swan submission covering all five schools in the faculty. She was chair of the University Women at Leeds network 2013-2017 and in December 2021 was one of the guest lecturers in the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures.

Awards and professional recognition:

2022 – Honorary Fellow, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)

2021 – Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering

2020 – OBE for Services to the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 – Royal Academy of Engineering Presidents Special Award for Pandemic Service

2018 – Academy of Fellows, International Society for Indoor Air Quality (ISIAQ)

2016 – University of Leeds, Women of Achievement Award

2014 – Recipient of IMechE Construction and Building Services Division Prize

2014 – Fellow of Institution of Mechanical Engineers (FIMechE)

2013 – Fellow of Institute of Healthcare Engineering and Estates Management (FIHEEM)

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2. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

[Chemicals company fined after releasing cloud of chlorine gas into factory](#)

A chemicals company has been fined after releasing a cloud of toxic chlorine gas that spread through its factory, yard and surrounding area resulting in

staff needing hospital treatment and significant damage to the factory.

On 12 June 2019, Wiltshire company GEA Farm Technologies (UK) Ltd mistakenly mixed an Intermediate Bulk Container (IBC) containing approximately 700 kg of concentrated sulphuric acid into a mixing vessel which already contained 1,600 litres of sodium hypochlorite solution.

The chemicals reacted releasing a large cloud of toxic chlorine gas, which CCTV footage showed as it permeated the factory and surrounding area. There was no clear evacuation plan for workers caught on-site, with several taken to hospital with breathing difficulties – fortunately no one suffered long-term effects.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the incident happened because a dedicated mixing plant had not been brought back into service after maintenance work, and the company had failed to introduce effective records management for the temporary manual system.

GEA Farm Technologies (UK) Ltd, based on Watery Lane, Warminster, Wiltshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and were fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £22,000 at Basingstoke Magistrates' Court on 4 October 2022.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector, Malcolm Whyatt, said: "In this case several workers were put at risk from a cloud of chlorine gas which drifted uncontrolled through their workplace.

"The company had previously designed their system to eliminate the possibility of human error, by reverting to a manual process they created a situation where mixing incompatible chemicals was possible. Chlorine can have severe health effects at very low levels, and they were fortunate that no-one was more seriously injured."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
3. More information about working with chemicals can be found at: [Chemicals at work \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/chemicals-at-work/)
4. HSE news releases are available at: [http://press.hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk/press/)