

Chemical logistics company fined after 'family man' dies following fall from mobile loading ramp

- Peter Hutchinson, 60, fell 1.5m from the ramp onto a concrete floor.
- Bertschi UK Ltd failed to properly plan the loading activity which used the ramp
- Also failed to install a handrail on the mobile loading ramp, despite manufacturer's instructions clearly requiring this
- Fined £425,000.

Bertschi UK Limited has been fined £425,000 after a warehouse supervisor suffered fatal injuries following a fall from a mobile loading ramp during a container loading operation at its Middlesbrough site.

Peter Hutchinson, 60, was employed as a Warehouse Supervisor by Bertschi UK Limited and had worked for the company since around 2009.

On 4 November 2021, Mr Hutchinson was helping to load plastic waste bales into a shipping container at the company's site in Middlesbrough.



The mobile ramp from where Mr Hutchinson fell

As Mr Hutchinson accessed the ramp, a plastic bale slipped from the forklift truck which was loading them into the container. This caused Mr Hutchinson to step backwards and fall approximately 1.5 metres onto the concrete surface below.

Mr Hutchinson suffered serious injuries and died in hospital on 23 November 2021.

Peter's wife Karen Hutchinson, said:

"My husband Peter was the family man and everything we did revolved around him.

"Everyone is struggling to come to terms with their dad, uncle and friend not being here. He did so much for so many people.

"To explain my feelings of loss is to try and explain the unthinkable – there are just simply no words.

"Peter was my husband and very best friend. He was my always and forever and he is my forever always."

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Bertschi UK Limited failed to properly assess the risks associated with the loading operation and failed to adequately consider and control the risks arising from pedestrian use of mobile loading ramps.

The investigation found that employees were permitted to access the ramps without handrails. In spite of the fact that the manufacturer of the ramp had specifically advised that pedestrians should not use the ramp unless handrails were fitted.

HSE also found that the company had not sufficiently considered reasonably practicable alternatives that would have avoided work at height altogether, including using existing loading bays or placing containers on the ground before loading.

Employers must properly plan and assess work at height and ensure that it is avoided where it is reasonably practicable to do so. Where work at height cannot be avoided, suitable measures must be in place to prevent falls and protect workers from injury.

Bertschi UK Limited, was found guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Regulation 6(2) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005.

Following a trial at Teesside Crown Court in April 2026 Bertschi UK was fined £425,000 and ordered to pay costs of £119,258 at a hearing at Teesside Crown Court on Friday 17 July 2026.

HSE inspector Cain Mitchell said:

"Peter Hutchinson lost his life in an incident that was entirely preventable. The manufacturers instructions were clear: no pedestrian should have been using the ramp without handrails being fitted.

"Employers should carefully assess work at height activities and always consider whether the task can be carried out without exposing workers to fall risks.

"This was a new activity – changes to established working practices can introduce new risks and employers must ensure those risks are identified and

controlled before work begins.

“This prosecution should remind dutyholders that HSE will not hesitate to take enforcement action when workers are unnecessarily placed at risk.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE Enforcement Lawyer Jonathan Bambro and Paralegal Officer Rebecca Forman.

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: [Work at Height](#)
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](#).