

Companies fined after labourer fractures skull

Two companies have been fined £46,000 in total after a labourer from Runcorn fractured his skull.

The man had been working on a new build house when he fell through a stairwell on 3 March 2021.

He was working for Total Brickwork (UK) Ltd at a construction site run by Challenger Building Services Ltd on Okell Street, Runcorn. The two companies had been working on the construction of four new semi-detached and five terraced houses at the site.

The 46-year-old, who was 43 at the time, was on the first floor in one of the new terraced properties after being instructed by the director of Total Brickwork to clear up debris and mortar that had been left behind by bricklayers.

He had climbed up the first floor using a ladder at the stairwell opening, which had been covered with temporary boards. The boards were slid apart to allow access to the first floor.



Intending to sweep the debris down the stairwell opening, the man lifted up one of the temporary boards and stepped forward as he was going to lean it against a wall.

However, he fell through the stairwell opening onto the ground floor below as there were no floorboards underneath the temporary boards.

He fractured his skull, sustained multiple broken ribs and needed a plate to be inserted into his collarbone.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the principal contractor Challenger Building Services Limited and Total Brickwork (UK) Ltd, the contractor in control of the work activity, had failed to plan, manage and monitor work at the site to ensure it could be carried out safely. Any worker accessing the first floor was at risk of injury due to a lack of appropriate measures for preventing falls from height.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Construction – Working at height industry health & safety](#)

Challenger Building Services Ltd, of Lee Lane, Horwich, Bolton, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulation 2015. The company was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £1,991.32 in costs at Warrington Magistrates' Court on 23 October 2023.

Total Brickwork UK Ltd, of Weston Road, Runcorn, Cheshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 15(2) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulation 2015. The company was fined £16,000 and ordered to pay £1,991.32 in costs at Warrington Magistrates' Court on 23 October 2023.

HSE inspector David Brassington said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided had the risks associated with working on the upper floors been adequately assessed and measures been taken to protect the stairwell openings.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

This HSE prosecution was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski.

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. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>