

Company fined £2.3m after workers put at risk of death

A major pipeline transportation company has been fined £2.3million for safety breaches after its employees were exposed to risk of serious injury and even death while working on a leaking pipeline containing petrol under pressure.

Workers at Exolum Pipeline System Ltd, formerly known as CLH Pipeline System (CLH-PS) Ltd, were excavating a suspected pipeline leak in the woodland adjacent to the B1398 and M180 near Holme, North Lincolnshire, between 7 to 10 March 2018. The employees were working in an area where a previous repair had taken place.

The risks arising from the excavation work and exposure were significant. An unknown defect on the previous repair of the pipeline which contained petroleum under high pressure had the potential to form a flammable cloud extending over several metres from the work area, causing those in the immediate vicinity to potentially be covered in a heavy spray of petrol and engulfed in petrol vapour. If ignition had occurred before the area could be evacuated, then there would have been a very high risk of death or serious injury.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident found that Exolum Pipeline System Ltd failed to properly identify and control the risks associated with carrying out a pipeline repair.

Exolum Pipeline System Ltd, of King William Street, London, was found guilty of an offence contrary to Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and an offence contrary to Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 following a trial at Grimsby Crown Court. The company was fined £2.3million and ordered to pay £157,431 in costs at Grimsby Crown Court on 24 March 2023.

HSE inspector Mark Leadbetter said: "This incident had the potential to cause serious injury or death to multiple casualties and could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.

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

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>