

Company fined after employee sustains serious burn injuries

A company has been fined after a worker suffered serious injuries following an explosion at their factory.

Chelmsford Magistrate's Court heard how, on the 24 September 2019, employees at Fabric Flare Solutions Limited, Unit 7, Gosford Road, Beccles, Suffolk, were treating fabrics with a hydrophobic coating that gave off flammable vapours both during the application process and when subsequently drying in the spray room. The flammable vapours ignited causing an explosion just as a 51-year-old employee was walking past the spray room. The blast threw him several metres across the factory and he suffered serious burn injuries to 15 per cent of his body.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Fabric Flare Solutions Ltd failed to ensure the safety of their employees by not eliminating several sources of ignition in the spray room, including liquid petroleum gas space heaters, domestic light fittings, and other electrical equipment. The company had ignored the clear instruction on the safety data sheet for the substance to be kept away from sources of heat, hot surfaces, sparks, open flames, and other ignition sources.

Fabric Flare Solutions Ltd of 44 Pinbush Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £26,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,196.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Tim Underwood said: "Employers who handle, store or use flammable substances must consider the potential risk of fire and explosion and ensure they have robust procedures in place to assess and control risk at all times.

"This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of the company to fully assess the risk and implement safe systems of work."

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](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/)