

Company fined after man left 'physically ruined' after fall from height

- Aaron Back, 41, fell from tipping bucket while dismantling pipework
- No suitable arrangements were in place to manage their contractors and ensure safety on their construction site
- Falls from height remain leading cause of death and injury.

A principal contractor has been fined after a man was left 'physically ruined' after falling from a tipping bucket on a fork lift truck in Kent.

Aaron Back, 41, a father of four, spent months in hospital after the incident at the EMIR site on Wotton Road in Ashford on 28 March 2023. The then 38-year-old had been contracted by South East Refurbishment Limited to carry out work dismantling pipework. He was in a raised tipping bucket on a fork lift truck at the time when he fell out of it to the concrete floor below.



The fork lift truck used with the bucket in the background

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found that a scissor lift had been ordered to undertake the work but was too tall to enter the area where it was taking place – so the fork lift truck was used instead.

In a victim personal statement, Aaron Back said:

"Since the incident I am physically ruined.

"My left hand side doesn't work properly. I can't push off from my toes on my left so I struggle to get up and walk around. My back also causes me excruciating pain.

"This accident has destroyed me as a person it has taken away my identity. I miss taking my kids to football.

"I have worked hard to improve and get better I want to be that person again.

"I worked hard for the company and I have been given a lifetime sentence. I

would give anything to be normal again to be back to being me.”

The HSE investigation found that no suitable arrangements were in place to manage the company’s contractors and ensure safety on the site. No actions had taken by the company either to ensure a different safe system of working was undertaken.

Although the company provided equipment to its labour-only subcontractor there was no training in place for relating to the fork lift truck or scissor lift for Mr Back or his sub-contractor. There was no instruction or procedure in place to ensure only trained operatives could get access to these and no adequate supervision on site.

HSE found significant failings by the company relating to unsafe work at height over a prolonged period of time, relevant advice and enforcement was given to them from 2013 regarding control of contractors and unsafe working at height.

Falls from height remain the leading cause of workplace death and injury with the latest statistics from HSE showing that they account for over a quarter of all [work related deaths in 2025/26](#).

HSE guidance states what an employer must do to protect their employees from [falls from height](#) including making sure work is properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people.

South East Refurbishment Limited of Unit 5 Aja Business Centre Laker Road, Rochester, Kent, pleaded guilty to Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 3(1). The company was fined £90,000 and ordered to pay costs of £27,241 at Margate Magistrates Court on 7 July 2026.

HSE inspector Joanne Williams said:

“Falls from height continue to be the leading cause of workplace fatalities in Great Britain, with 31 people losing their lives in the past year.

“The construction industry remains the sector that accounts for the greatest number of workers killed each year.

“These figures do not include those individuals that have sustained serious, life changing injuries, resulting from a fall from height.

“In this case Aaron and his family have had their lives changed forever following what was a completely avoidable incident.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward and assisted by paralegal Jason Dix.

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. 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](#).