

Company fined as worker suffers serious burns

A company has been fined after a worker sustained serious burns to their body.

Carl Lowery had been working on new apartment blocks at The Crescent, Hulme Street, Salford when an electrical flash blew him backwards and burnt his arms and face on 12 May 2020.

The then 37-year-old underwent multiple surgeries following the incident and required a skin graft from his thigh.

The incident happened almost three years after Carl lost his son Bradley to a rare form of cancer. Along with his wife Gemma, Carl established the Bradley Lowery Foundation, which helps families that are fundraising to obtain medical equipment and treatment.

Carl, now 41, had been working alongside a colleague at SRE Cabling and Jointing Limited, with the company sub-contracted by Aberla M&E Limited to carry out cabling and jointing works on the new apartments.



Carl Lowery

The pair were working on the building's main switchboard, with nearby bus bars left live with electricity and covered by a guard panel.

However, a gap in the guard panel led to a nut rolling behind and coming into contact with the live bus bars, causing an electrical flash which blew Carl backwards and burnt his arms and face.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into this incident found Aberla M&E Limited had incorrectly assumed the guard panel was sufficient separation of the workers from the live bus bars. The company failed to take into account a gap in the guard panel, which risked nuts, bolts, tools and even fingers coming into contact with the bus bars. There was also a failure to issue a permit to work (PTW) on or near live components, which resulted in the main switchboard being left live. There was also a distinct lack of live works monitoring by the company, with the electrical site manager rarely visiting the work area.

Carl said in his victim personal statement: "Even when Bradley was poorly I worked. I've not been able to work since the accident either, mentally or

physically.

“My left hand is my dominant hand and after the accident I had no grip. I had to try and learn how to use my non-dominant hand.”

HSE guidance states employers must produce a risk assessment prior to working with electricity. The risk assessment must cover who could be harmed by electrical hazards, how the level of risk has been established and the precautions taken to control the risk. More on this can be found at:

[Electrical safety – HSE](#)

Aberla M&E Limited, of The Parklands, Bolton, Greater Manchester, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £20,000 in costs at Manchester Magistrates’ Court on 14 March 2024.

HSE inspector Lisa Bailey said: “This incident has had life-changing consequences for Carl and his family. It could have been avoided if the company had actively monitored and managed procedures, to identify risks and prevent incidents.

“Working with electricity is a high-risk activity and safety must be a priority. Proper planning to ensure that risks are eliminated at system design stage is essential.”

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.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.