

Council fined after man falls while installing town's Christmas tree

- 20-foot tree toppled during Bury Market installation
- HSE has well-established guidance on safely working at height

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council has been fined £200,000 after a man was injured while installing the town's Christmas tree.

Council employee James Lyth was using a scissor lift to straighten the 20-foot tall Christmas tree when it toppled over with him still in the basket.



The tree was being installed by an external company at Bury Market on 21 November 2022, in time for the town's annual festivities at Christmas shopping destination.

The 32-year-old operations manager suffered concussion and severe injuries to his right-hand side, including bruising to his ribs. He needed an operation to his leg and was left using a wheelchair and crutches after sustaining a large cut to his leg. Mr Lyth was off work for two months and was subsequently only able to return on restricted hours and duties as he continued his recovery.

Working at height remains one of the leading causes of workplace injury and death and HSE has detailed guidance on [working safely at height](#).

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Bury Metropolitan Borough Council had failed to provide Mr Lyth with any training in the safe operation of the scissor lift and had failed carry out a sufficient risk assessment for this work activity.

The investigation also found that a suitable risk assessment of the work would have identified the dangers involved and the need to restrict the use of scissor lifts to those with appropriate training.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The organisation was fined £200,000 and were ordered to pay costs at a hearing at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 2 April 2025.

HSE inspector Leanne Ratcliffe said: "This was a very serious incident.

"It is important for industry to understand the importance of a risk assessment and training when using elevated platforms. Access to these platforms should be limited to those trained and anyone who isn't trained shouldn't be allowed to use them.

"If this sort of work is not planned and controlled to a high degree, then there is a very high likelihood of a potentially fatal fall, or one resulting in very serious injury."

The prosecutions were supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Hannah Snelling.

Notes to Editors:

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](#).
5. Guidance on [working safely at height](#), and [with elevated platforms](#) is available.