

Engineering firm fined £27,200 after endangering workers

- HSE inspection found poor control of metalworking fluids on CNC machines.
- Workers were put at risk of ill-health including dermatitis, asthma and other respiratory conditions.
- The firm failed to comply with Improvement Notices issued by HSE inspectors.

An engineering firm in Bedfordshire has been fined £27,200 after poor management of safety put employees at risk of ill-health including dermatitis, asthma and other respiratory conditions.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecution was the result of a routine inspection in July 2022. HSE inspectors identified a number of concerns which were brought to the company's attention, specifically on the use of metalworking fluids in CNC machines.

This led to HSE inspectors serving formal Improvement Notices, which required the company to prepare a suitable risk assessment for the activities, and to have appropriate testing and monitoring arrangements in place.

When HSE conducted a follow-up inspection it found that, despite the requirements of the Improvement Notices, the company had failed to undertake a suitable assessment. Documentation still failed to identify hazards and potential health effects, did not consider measures necessary to reduce the risk of inhalation of metalworking fluid mist, and did not consider or implement suitable arrangements to maintain metalworking fluid quality. Inspectors also found that testing of fluids remained less frequent than recommended in guidance. The company had not complied with the Improvement Notices, and a prosecution was commenced in January 2024.

HSE guidance states that employers must maintain fluid quality and control bacterial contamination of fluids, minimise skin exposure to fluids, prevent or control airborne mists and, where there is exposure to fluid or mist, carry out appropriate health surveillance. Further guidance on [Metalworking fluids – HSE](#) can be found on HSE's website.

Tracel Ltd, trading as The Engineering Quest, of Sand Road Industrial Estate, Great Gransden, Sandy, Bedfordshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations and to two charges of breaching Section 21 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. District Judge Sally Fudge fined the company £27,200 and ordered to pay £30,000 in costs at Luton Magistrates' Court on 8 January 2026.

HSE Inspector Stephen Manley said:

"We are committed to maintaining Great Britain's record as one of the safest countries to work in, and our inspection activity is central to delivering

this. “This case was entirely avoidable had the company taken appropriate action following our inspection, and I hope it encourages others to review their arrangements.

“Poor management of the use of metalworking fluids still leads to workers developing lung diseases and dermatitis. Employers must consider how these fluids are used and take steps to reduce and control exposure.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE senior enforcement lawyer Jon Mack and paralegal officer Gabrielle O’Sullivan.

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. Relevant guidance can be found at [Metalworking fluids – HSE](#)
5. 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](#).