

Engineering firm sentenced after fatal incident

An engineering company specialising in the manufacture of containers and drums for the nuclear, aerospace and medical industries has been sentenced after a worker was fatally injured.

Preston Crown Court heard that on 21 May 2018, Whilst working at Graham Engineering's site in Whitehalls Industrial Estate, Colin Willoughby was lying on his back, underneath the raised middle section of a Hugh Smith 1000 tonne capacity press, using a hand-held electric grinder to remove a weld from the base of a large metal piston. When the weld was removed, the internal ram fell through to the ground, crushing Mr Willoughby resulting in instant death.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Graham Engineering Ltd failed to carry out a risk assessment and ensure a safe system of work on the Hugh Smith 1000 tonne capacity press. The 20-tonne middle section of the press was raised using fork lift trucks which exceeded their safe working load, in order to access the underside of the press.

Following a trial in front of a jury Graham Engineering Ltd of Whitehalls Industrial Estate, Nelson was found guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The Company was fined £500,000 and ordered to pay costs of £145,487

Graham Engineering Ltd's Manufacturing Director was acquitted of an associated charge under Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Speaking after the hearing HSE principal inspector Steven Boyd said:

"An unsafe system of work was adopted by Graham Engineering Ltd whilst undertaking hazardous work and the ensuing sequence of events led to the untimely death of Mr Willoughby. This tragic incident could have been avoided if the task had been adequately risk assessed and supervised to ensure safe procedures were followed".

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
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. More information about safe use of work equipment can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm>
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>