

Farm fined after worker's leg trapped in machine

- “Safe stop” procedure must be followed when using potato harvesters, says regulator

A farming partnership has been fined £20,000 after an employee trapped his leg in a potato harvester machine whilst working on a farm in Cheshire.

The employee, who was 20-years-old at the time, was working for LP Ollier & Son on its potato farm when the incident occurred on 18 October 2023. Whilst assessing a blockage in the potato harvester machine, the roller mechanism caught his right leg and pulled it into the device, causing serious injuries including crushing, fractures, nerve damage and skin damage. He has been unable to work in agriculture since the incident.



An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the guard

gates to the machine were open and the machine was not isolated. LP Ollier & Son failed to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery, namely the rotating parts of a potato harvester by means of implementing and following a suitable safe system of work.

HSE guidance states that employers must follow the 'safe stop' procedure when using a potato harvester, including when dealing with blockages. This is in order to ensure that dangerous parts are not accessed when the machine is powered. Suitable training must be given, and monitoring and supervision must be in place to ensure that the 'safe stop' procedure is adhered to at all times. Guidance can be found here: [Safe use of potato harvesters – HSE](#).

LP Ollier & Son, of Frog Lane Farm, Frog Lane, Knutsford, Cheshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The partnership was fined £20,000 with a £2000 victim surcharge and ordered to pay £5,110.80 in costs at Warrington Magistrates Court.

HSE inspector Joseph Wright said: "All too often, serious and sometimes fatal incidents occur as a result of inadequate systems of work in relation to potato harvesters. This case was a wholly avoidable incident caused by the failure to follow the safe stop procedure for the potato harvester, and ensure that the machine was fully isolated before a blockage was addressed. Had the partnership ensured a suitable safe system of work was followed when blockages occurred, these life-changing injuries would not have occurred.

"The fine imposed on LP Ollier & Son should underline to everyone in the potato harvesting trade and wider agricultural industry, that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to abide by the law very seriously. We will not hesitate to take action when there is a failure to keep employees and contractors safe while they are working."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Imogen Isaac.

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](#).