

Farm partnership fined after man with 'heart of gold' killed by exploding tyre

A Lancashire farm partnership has been fined £80,000 after a man with 'a heart of gold' died following an incident at a dairy farm in Hutton near Preston.

Joshua Hardman, who was just 23, suffered fatal head injuries as he helped to inflate a tractor tyre at the farm on 7 May 2021. The father of one from Longridge, was working as a farmhand at the farm run by W Hesketh and Sons.

At the time of the incident, Joshua had been helping one of the partners in the business, Bill Hesketh, re-seat and inflate a large tractor tyre. As Mr Hesketh inflated the inner tube within the tyre, it suddenly exploded and the catastrophic release of compressed air propelled the wheel rim into Joshua, causing traumatic head injuries. He was taken to hospital and underwent skull and brain surgeries, but he subsequently passed away on 11 June after a further deterioration in his condition.

- Tyre removal, replacement and inflation should only be tackled by competent staff and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [guidance is available](#).

In a statement, his family said: "Joshua was a very loving, caring, kind and gentle person. He had a heart of gold.

"He was also an amazing dad, and it is heart-breaking that he will never reach his full potential in that role.

"His five-year-old daughter will miss out on a great deal of love and affection and the role he would have played in her life."



Joshua Hardman and his daughter Bonneigh

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that W Hesketh and Sons had failed to properly assess and plan this work activity. They also failed to identify and put in place the measures necessary to control the risks involved when inflating large commercial tyres.

The investigation also found that the risk of an explosion was much higher because the tyre, wheel rim and inner tube were all in a poorly maintained condition. A suitable and sufficient assessment had not been made to determine whether the damaged tyre, inner tube and wheel rim were suitable to be inflated safely.

W Hesketh and Sons, of Grange Lane, Hutton, Preston, pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974. They were fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £8,605 costs at a hearing at Preston Magistrates Court on 4 February 2025.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Anthony Banks said: "This was a tragic incident, and a much-loved young man has lost his life. It could have easily been avoided with the right controls in place.

"HSE would like to make all employers aware that, before they undertake the inflation of large commercial tyres, they need to have correctly assessed the risk and have in place the suitable controls for the task."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and supported by paralegal officer Rebecca Foreman.

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. 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. HSE guidance on [working safely with tyres](#) is available.