

Fencing contractor fined after employee suffers electric shock and burns

A fencing contractor in Liverpool has been fined after an employee suffered an electric shock and burns as a result of striking a live underground cable.

Paul Taylor was working for City Fencing Contractors Limited on a construction site at Meade Hill Road, Manchester on 21 May 2024. He had been part of a team installing security fencing to the Meade Hill Shul synagogue.

The 59-year-old was using a breaker to dig into the ground in preparation to install the metal fencing. However, the father-of-three struck a live underground cable causing electric shock, which resulted in him sustaining multiple burn injuries to his stomach, chest and arms.



Mr Taylor's clearly burnt workwear after the incident

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that City Fencing Contractors Limited had failed to implement suitable and sufficient controls to prevent risk from underground services.

HSE guidance states that construction work which is liable to create a risk to health or safety from an underground service, or from damage to or disturbance of it, must not be carried out unless suitable and sufficient steps have been taken to prevent the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable.

A safe system of work has three basic elements – planning the work; detecting, identifying and marking underground services; safe excavation/safe digging practices.

Careful planning and risk assessments are essential before the work starts. Risk assessments should consider how the work is to be carried out, ensuring local circumstances are taken into account.

Plans or other suitable information about all buried services in the area should be obtained and reviewed before any excavation work starts. Plans give only an indication of the location, and number of underground services at a particular site. It is essential that a competent person traces cables using suitable locating devices.

Before work begins, underground cables must be located, identified and clearly marked. Excavation work should be carried out carefully and follow recognised safe digging practices.

Further guidance can be found here: [Excavation and underground services – HSE](#).

City Fencing Contractors Limited, of 1 Brookfield Dr, Liverpool, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 25(4) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The Company was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £5,487 costs at Warrington Magistrates Court on 26 May 2026.

HSE inspector John Padfield said:

“Underground services are widespread and represent a significant risk.

“It is important measures are taken to identify them before any excavation work is undertaken.

“On this occasion, an electrical cable was struck and an operative suffered severe burns.

“However, it could have been much worse and potentially fatal. Had the company implemented an effective safe system of work following HSE guidance, this incident would not have occurred.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and paralegal officer Lynne Thomas.

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. Relevant guidance can be found here: [Excavation and underground services – 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](#).