

Firefighters left seriously injured in quarry training exercise

A fire service has been prosecuted after two of its firefighters received serious head injuries – with one paralysed from the chest down – after a training exercise.

A team of four firefighters from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service were carrying out a rope rescue training exercise at a disused quarry near Buxton on 29th September 2019.

Two of the firefighters received head injuries when rocks fell from the cliff face and hit them.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found there were failures in the arrangements and controls of the exercise.

The risk assessment failed to consider or identify the risk of falling rocks and or the impact recent heavy rainfall may have had on the stability of the rock face.

The fire service didn't have the health and safety guidance for off-site training events.

The investigation also found that the service failed to provide sufficient information, instruction, training, and supervision to its firefighters.

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority of Pirehill Lane pleaded guilty to failing to discharge the duties imposed upon it by Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £10,000 And ordered to pay costs of £6,808.40

HSE Inspector Andrew Johnson said: "This was a particularly tragic and very sadly, completely avoidable incident that has had a life changing impact on a valued firefighter and their family. In this case, very simple and straightforward precautions that would have prevented this incident were absent. I hope this underscores a very clear message to all companies and emergency services that when they plan their work at height training, it is planned meticulously and supervised appropriately in order to ensure that all necessary controls to ensure safety are used."

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](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

legislation.gov.uk/

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>