

Firm fined more than £500,000 after shift worker fell to his death

- HSE guidance on working at height and safe use of machinery is available

A North Yorkshire company has been fined more than half a million pounds after a night shift worker fell to his death.

Mark Pinder, 51, was working for East Riding Sacks Ltd, a manufacturer of paper sacks, at its site in Stamford Bridge, near York, when the incident happened on 11 February 2023.

Mr Pinder, from York, had been operating one of the production lines when a blockage occurred on the upper deck of the machinery. After identifying the cause, he attempted to remove the blockage. He had been standing on the stationery metal rollers when his colleagues witnessed part of the machine being activated. Mr Pinder was struck by the machine which caused him to lose his footing.



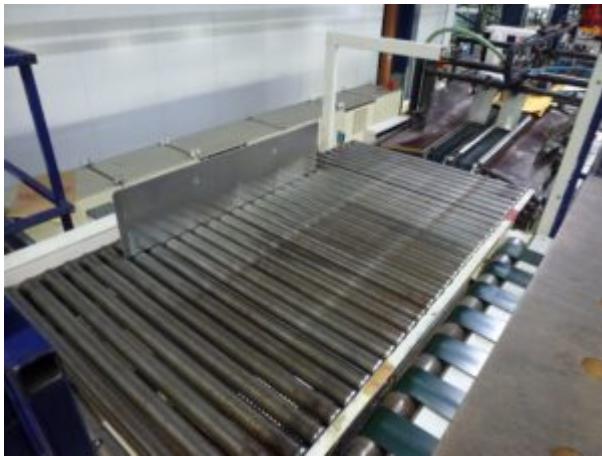
Mark Pinder fell from a height of approximately three metres

He fell approximately three metres from the unguarded edge of the metal rollers to the factory floor below.

Although paramedics were called to the factory, he died at the scene as a result of his injuries.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that East Riding Sacks Ltd failed to provide a robust safe system of work. This related to the isolation of the sack making line and the removal of blockages. They also failed to identify the risk from a fall from height and implement appropriate measures.

Falls from height remains one of the leading causes of workplace injury and death and HSE has detailed guidance on [working safely at height](#).



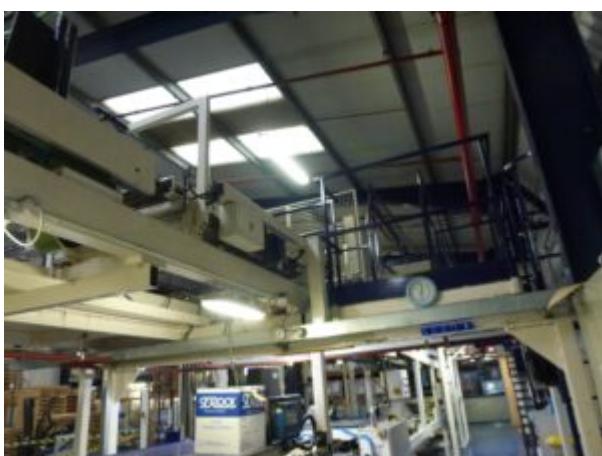
The pusher plate and metal rollers which Mr Pinder stood on

The HSE investigation also found that workers routinely cleared blockages themselves, relying solely on the interlock guarding to stop the machine, even though they had not been adequately trained in isolation or blockage removal procedures. In addition, workers were using the conveyor belt as a shortcut between gantries, often climbing over the handrails onto the equipment rather than down the stairs and walking around. Management were unaware of this practice.

HSE guidance states employers must take effective measures to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery and to avoid work at height where possible. Where routine access is required to components, suitable measures should be taken to stop the movement of dangerous parts before a person can reach a danger zone. Further guidance can be found here:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/power-overview.htm>

East Riding Sacks Ltd, of Full Sutton Industrial Estate, Stamford Bridge, Full Sutton, York, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £533,000 and ordered to pay £6,066 in costs at Hull Magistrates Court on 30 April 2025.



Open edge on the left of the blue railings is where the fall occurred

HSE inspector Elliot Archer said: "Every year, a significant proportion of accidents, many of them serious and often fatal, occur as a result of people accessing dangerous parts of machinery and working at height.

"Where access beyond machinery guarding and safety devices is required for

the removal of blockages, robust isolation procedures to remove all sources of power should be implemented alongside a suitable safe systems of work.

"Had these been in place, and the recognition of work at height being undertaken been flagged by the company, with appropriate controls implemented, this incident would have been avoidable"

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Karen Park and paralegal officer Lucy Gallagher.

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. Guidance on the provision and use of work equipment can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/power-overview.htm>
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 in England can be found [here](#) and those for Scotland [here](#).