

Hartlepool chemical manufacturer fined £50,000 after two serious incidents within three months

- An employee had four fingers severed when a rotary valve had not been properly isolated from the power supply
- A second employee was struck by a forklift truck when the driver's view was obscured by the load
- Exwold Technology fined over £50,000 for two breaches of Health and Safety at Work act

A Hartlepool chemical manufacturer has been fined after two employees were injured in separate incidents at two of its sites within just three months.

On 3 September 2021, an employee at Exwold Technology Limited's Haverton Hill site in Billingham sustained serious injuries when four fingers on his left hand were severed during machinery start-up. The blades of a rotary valve had not been effectively isolated from the power supply while part of the production line was being prepared between cleaning operations. As the employee checked for air flow, his fingers became caught between the blades and the valve's internal casing, resulting in the amputation.

Less than three months later, on 24 November 2021, a second incident occurred at the company's Brenda Road site in Hartlepool. An employee was struck by a forklift truck after the driver's view was obscured by the load being carried. The driver was unaware that a pedestrian was walking in front of the vehicle at the time of the collision.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that at the Billingham site the company had failed to put suitable procedures in place to effectively isolate dangerous machinery between cleaning operations.

A separate investigation found that at the Hartlepool site the company had failed to effectively manage forklift truck operations and designated pedestrian routes.

HSE provides guidance to help prevent incidents of this kind. For chemical manufacturing sites with machinery related risks, including the safe isolation of equipment during cleaning and maintenance, HSE's guidance on [the safe isolation of plant and equipment](#) outlines the standards and procedures duty holders should follow to ensure hazardous machinery is securely isolated before work takes place.

For workplace transport risks, including the management of forklift operations and separation of pedestrians and vehicles, HSE's [guide to workplace transport safety](#) sets out clear expectations for safe site design, traffic routes, vehicle visibility and segregation measures to prevent collisions.

Exwold Technology Limited of Brenda Road, Hartlepool, pleaded guilty to two breaches of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay £10,492.19 in costs with a victim surcharge of £190 at Teesside Magistrates' Court on 29 January 2026.

In court, the judge referenced the genuine improvement the company had made to improve health and safety following the incidents.

HSE Inspector Jonathan Wills said: "Workplace transport and machinery guarding incidents continue to have lifechanging consequences for those who are simply carrying out their day-to-day jobs.

"The safe isolation of dangerous moving parts must be considered for routine maintenance activities such as this.

"Businesses must also ensure that precautions are in place to protect workers in areas where forklift trucks operate.

For two such serious incidents to occur at the same company in such a short space of time is particularly troubling, and Exwold Technology Limited's work to improve health and safety at their sites is necessary and urgent."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Jonathan Bambro and paralegal officer Rebecca Withell.

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. Relevant guidance can be found at [The safe isolation of plant and equipment – HSE](#) and [A guide to workplace transport safety – 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](#)