

Cheshire-based property developer fined £45,000 for multiple construction site failures

- Company fined for serious health and safety failures at a Manchester construction site
- The company repeatedly failed to improve standards or fulfil principal contractor duties.
- Free guidance on managing health and safety in construction is available

A Cheshire property developer has been fined £45,000 after the Health and Safety Executive found multiple failures at a construction site in Manchester.

Numerous health and safety failings were found during a site inspection at a home build project being undertaken by Stockport Development Limited on Kingsley Road, Manchester, in November 2023. The inspection by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found missing edge protection on first floor landings, missing and damaged security fencing, a lack of fire alarms and extinguishers, heavily obstructed walkways, and inadequate welfare provision for workers.

This resulted in four Improvement Notices being served, requiring the company to take action to comply with the law and protect its workers and members of the public.

When it was established that there had been four previous visits to the company's construction sites between February 2021 and March 2023, all of which resulting in enforcement action being taken in relation to poor health and safety standards, an investigation was launched by HSE.

The investigation established that the company had repeatedly failed to fulfil its principal contractor duties and had failed to take heed of previous warnings and advice given by HSE inspectors.



Images from Stockport Development Limited site

Principal contractors have a responsibility to plan, manage and monitor construction work to ensure that it is carried out without risks to health or safety. Further guidance on [Managing health and safety in construction – HSE](#) can be found on HSE's website.

Stockport Development Limited, of Bird Hall Lane, Stockport, Cheshire, pleaded guilty to a breach of regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The company was ordered to pay a fine of £45,000 plus surcharge of £18,000 and costs of £6,297 at Manchester Magistrates court on Friday 12th December.

HSE Inspector, Claire Whitehurst, said: "This company showed a total disregard for keeping its workers and members of the public safe by failing to meet the most basic health and safety standards.

"Principal contractors have a responsibility to ensure they identify and manage risks involved in construction work, and to put safe systems in place to protect all who may be affected by their undertaking.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action, including prosecution, against those that fall below the required standards, even where no incident has occurred."

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and supported by HSE paralegal officer Benjamin Stobbart.

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 here: [Managing health and safety in construction – 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](#).

Manufacturer sentenced after a sawmill worker lost his leg following an accident at work

- Worker had one leg amputated below the knee and sustained significant injuries to the other
- Major injury rate for sawmilling is over two and a half times that of general manufacturing
- Free guidance is available, developed in collaboration with HSE and the sawmill industry.

A large wood manufacturer in Shropshire has been fined £160,000 after an employee sustained life-changing injuries when working at their Ellesmere premises.

Robert Stubbs, 37, sustained life-changing injuries when clearing a jammed log on a machine in May 2021. Mr Stubbs climbed onto a stationary conveyor bed and used a metal pole to move a log. The conveyor started to move unexpectedly, dragging his legs across the moving chains and trapping them against a stop plate. Subsequently Mr Stubbs had his right leg amputated below the knee and sustained significant injuries to his left leg.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that E.T.C. Sawmills Limited failed to adequately assess the risks and devise and implement effective measures to prevent access to the dangerous moving parts of the Quad Saw machine or to stop the movement of the dangerous parts before people entered the danger zones. Additionally, the company failed to provide employees with safe systems of work or suitable and sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to enable safe operation of the machine.



ETC Sawmills Factory

Although standards of health and safety are much improved over recent years, sawmilling remains a high-risk industry with a major injury rate that is over two and a half times that of general manufacturing.

Machinery accidents remain one of the major causes of injury, with lock-out procedures for interrupting mechanised production processes still being a problem area. There is also an average of one fatality every year. HSE sawmill guidance is available to read at [Health and safety in sawmilling – HSE](#).

E.T.C. Sawmills Limited, 281 Penarth Road, Cardiff, CF11 8YF, pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £160,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,395.51 at Kidderminster magistrates court on Tuesday 9 December.

HSE Inspector Keeley Eves said: “E.T.C Sawmills is one of the largest manufacturers of softwoods for the fencing and pallet industries in England.

“The life-changing injuries sustained by Mr Stubbs could easily have been prevented if the company had acted to identify and manage the risks involved, put a safe system of work in place and ensured that employees were appropriately trained and supervised.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE senior enforcement lawyer, Nathan

Cook and paralegal, Sarah Thomas.

Further Information:

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[Buncefield 20 years on: Turning lessons into safer industry practices](#)

- Two decades after one of Europe's largest industrial incidents, the legacy of Buncefield continues to shape safety standards across the UK's major hazards sector

This week marks 20 years since the Buncefield explosion in Hertfordshire – one of the largest industrial incidents in Europe and the UK's largest peacetime explosion.

The incident



In the early hours of Sunday 11th December 2005 explosions occurred at Buncefield Oil Storage Depot, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

In the early hours of 11 December 2005, a storage tank at the Buncefield oil storage depot overfilled, releasing a massive petrol vapour cloud that spread beyond the site perimeter and ignited. The resulting explosions and fires caused widespread damage and disruption, forcing thousands of residents and businesses to evacuate.

Remarkably, no lives were lost. However, the impact on people, property and the environment was profound. More than 2,000 homes and 600 businesses were affected, with damage extending several kilometres beyond the site. The incident left a lasting mark on the local community and fundamentally changed the UK's approach to managing major hazard risks.

Investigation and accountability

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA) jointly led one of the most extensive industrial investigations in UK history. The work involved detailed forensic analysis, engineering assessments and consultation with industry experts to determine how the incident occurred and what could be learned.

The investigation identified systematic failings in tank level monitoring, overfill prevention and safety management systems. Weak oversight and inadequate controls allowed large quantities of petrol to overflow undetected, leading to the release of a vapour cloud that ignited with catastrophic force.

Following the investigation, the operating companies and site owners were successfully prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The courts imposed multi-million-pound fines, setting a precedent for accountability in major hazard industries. The case outcomes reinforced the responsibility of operators to maintain robust systems for preventing and mitigating major accidents and the importance of Process Safety Leadership.



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency (EA)

investigated the incident and secured convictions against five companies, who were ordered to pay almost £10m in combined fines and costs.

Learning and reform

In the aftermath of the incident, several major reviews and task groups were established to drive improvements:

- The Buncefield Standards Task Group (BSTG) – a joint regulator-industry initiative – developed stronger standards for fuel storage and transfer operations
- The Major Incident Investigation Board (MIIB) published a series of influential reports identifying root causes and recommending wide-ranging reforms to safety leadership, management systems and emergency planning
- The Process Safety Leadership Group (PSLG) was created to oversee implementation, producing its 2009 final report which set out new benchmarks for overfill prevention, automatic shutdown, secondary containment and process safety management.

Onshore major hazard industries have recently relaunched the Process Safety Leadership Principles Guidance taking the important opportunity this anniversary offers to promote good practice.

These reports provided a foundation for industry-wide reform, promoting stronger leadership, real-time monitoring, improved reliability of electrical and control systems, and closer collaboration between regulators and operators.

Sarah Albon, Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive, said:

“Twenty years on from Buncefield, we remember not only the scale of the incident but also the determination shown by everyone involved to learn from what happened and drive lasting change.

“The comprehensive investigations, reforms to safety standards, and strengthened collaboration between regulators and industry have created a legacy that continues to protect people and places today. Buncefield demonstrated that when we face serious challenges head-on with transparency and commitment to improvement, we can fundamentally change how major hazards are managed.

“As HSE, we remain committed to applying these lessons, working closely with industry and our regulatory partners to ensure the highest standards of safety and environmental protection across all major hazard sites in Great Britain.”

Legacy and ongoing impact

Two decades on, Buncefield remains a defining moment in UK major hazards safety regulation. The incident exposed critical weaknesses in risk management and highlighted the importance of learning, transparency and continuous improvement in the robust oversight of major hazard sites.

Since then, HSE and the EA have worked with industry and international partners to strengthen safety standards, enhance risk management and ensure consistent enforcement where failings occur.

The lessons of Buncefield continue to shape not only how onshore major hazard industry operates, but how HSE itself develops as a regulator. Investing in people, building capability and fostering a culture of learning remain central to HSE's mission.

Ken Rivers, Board Member for Health and Safety Executive said:

"Buncefield has led to profound changes not just in the operational, technical and regulatory aspects of managing major hazards but also in leadership, and the way industry and regulator work together in the UK.

"It led industry to becoming more self-disciplined, taking ownership, and it led to a more mature and collaborative relationship with the regulator.

"The impact of Buncefield remains with us today continuing to stimulate industry and regulator to work together to protect people and places."

The Buncefield anniversary is an important reminder that vigilance, leadership, continuous learning and robust regulation are essential to protecting people, communities and the environment.

Notes to editors:

- [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.
- Buncefield section on our website: [Buncefield – HSE](#)
- Process Safety Leadership Group (PSLG) guidance: [Buncefield Response Programme](#)

Tree specialists fined after worker falls from height

- Worker suffered life-altering back injuries after falling from a MEWP basket.
- HSE found the company failed to plan, supervise or safely carry out work at height.
- AP Tree Specialists Ltd fined £20,000; director fined £1,000.

An arboriculture company based in Derby has been fined £20,000 after an employee suffered life-altering back injuries when he fell over 30 feet from a MEWP basket.

An employee of AP Tree Specialists Ltd had been carrying out tree surgery from the basket of a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP) at a mobile site in Derby on 25 January 2024. When the machine stopped working while elevated, there was no one on site who could bring the basket safely to the ground. The employee attempted to abseil from the basket, resulting in a fall to the ground.



The basket of a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP)

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found that AP Tree Specialists Ltd failed to plan, appropriately supervise and carry out work at height in a safe manner. The company had not completed a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for work at height activities, and employees were not appropriately trained in the use of lifting equipment.

The director, Matthew Scholes, was acting as site supervisor at the time and was directly involved in decisions and actions that led to the injuries sustained by the employee.

The Work at Height Regulations require employers to ensure that work at height is properly planned, appropriately supervised, and carried out safely. Where lifting equipment is used, HSE guidance states that operatives must receive appropriate training, and that rescue planning, equipment and personnel must be considered as part of site assessment. Further guidance is freely available in HSE's [Safe Use of Lifting Equipment \(LOLER\) Approved Code of Practice](#).

AP Tree Specialists Ltd pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £6,956 in costs at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 3 December 2025.

Director Matthew Scholes pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. He was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £400 in costs.

HSE investigating inspector, Kerry Scott, said: "This incident could have

been avoided if AP Tree Specialists Ltd had planned the work at height with suitable and sufficient risk assessments and safe systems of work, including a rescue plan. They should have provided the employee with the correct information, instruction and training for working at height and for using the lifting equipment. HSE will not fail to take action where companies and directors do not ensure the health and safety of their employees.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and supported by paralegal officer Thomas Smith.

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3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here [Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22](#).
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](#).

[Manufacturing firm fined after apprentice suffers serious injuries](#)

- 18-year-old was still learning how to operate machinery when incident occurred
- Harry now has to live with permanent scarring and a loss of feeling on the side of his chest.
- HSE guidance on preventing access to dangerous parts of machinery is available.

A manufacturing company in Newbury has been fined £187,600 after the shirt of an apprentice got caught in machinery.

Harry Pullen, who was 18 years old at the time, was pulled into a radial-arm drill resulting in three broken ribs and needing skin grafts.



The radial-arm drill

He had been working as a machinist for Power and Energy International, manufacturing industrial valves and filters, for less than a year when the incident occurred on 10 July 2023.

The apprentice was still learning how to operate the different machines involved in manufacturing. He was left with a large piece of skin removed from his chest, hospitalised for five days and unable to work for six months.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Power and Energy International had failed to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of their employees. The company's radial-arm drills did not have adequate guarding. Machine operators, including Harry, had not been properly trained on using the safety features. The company was also found to have made modifications to the radial-arm drill which increased the risk of operators getting caught and pulled into the machine.

HSE guidance states employers must properly assess risks and take effective measures to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery. This is normally achieved with fixed or adjustable guards but where this is not practicable other protective devices may be needed that stop the movement of dangerous parts. Employers must also ensure that they provide their employees with the necessary level of information, instruction, training, and supervision to enable them to work safely with the equipment they use. Guidance on health and safety in engineering workshops can be found on the HSE website: [Health and safety in engineering workshops – HSE](#)

Power and Energy International Ltd of Stanley Street, Salford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £187,600 and was ordered to pay £7,464 in costs at a hearing at High Wycombe Magistrates Court on 8 December 2025.

After the hearing HSE inspector, Peter Crees, said: "The fine imposed on Power and Energy International underlines the importance of having effective controls to protect workers who operate radial-arm drills and other

potentially dangerous machines.

“Harry’s injuries and the suffering it caused both him, and his family, could have easily been avoided.”

Harry now has to live with permanent scarring and a loss of feeling on the side of his chest. He said: *“I would not go back on a radial arm drill... it’s not something I ever want to do again.”*

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Iain Jordan and paralegal officer Melissa Wardle.

Further information:

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- More about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
- Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
- Guidance on the use of [work equipment](#) is available.
- 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 Scotland can be found [here](#).