

# Fine for company after worker fell to his death from church steeple

A specialist construction company has been fined £60,000 after a worker fell to his death from a church steeple in Birmingham.

David Clover was employed by Ecclesiastical Steeplejacks Ltd to carry out restoration work to St Nicholas' Church in Kings Norton on 13 November 2020. The 64-year-old steeplejack had been suspended from the 60 metre tall steeple of the Grade 1 listed building, sitting in a 'bosun's chair' – a work positioning seat – when he fell, suffering fatal injuries.



Steeplejack David Clover was suspended from the 60 metre tall steeple carrying out restoration works

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified that the bosun's chair was not supported by a suitable backup system preventing falls, such as, a double or twin leg lanyard fall arrest harness.

Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. 50 people died as a result of a fall from height in 2023/24. [HSE guidance is available](#).

Ecclesiastical Steeplejacks Ltd, which has ceased trading since the incident, pleaded guilty to contravening Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. It was fined £60,000 at a hearing at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 15 January 2025.



Mr Clover had been sat in a 'bosun's chair' – a work positioning seat – when he fell, suffering fatal injuries

In passing sentence, Judge Quereshi found the company had outdated attitudes to managing health and safety.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Emma Page said: "Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of work-related deaths and injury in Great Britain.

"We will take action against companies that fail to protect workers.

"Our thoughts remain with the family of David Clover."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Imogen Isaac.

#### **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. 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 and Wales can be found [here](#) and for those in Scotland [here](#).
5. HSE guidance on [working safely at height](#) is available.

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## **[Company fined after repeatedly](#)**

# exposing workers to risks from wood dust

A Blackburn-based furniture manufacturer has been fined after it repeatedly failed to protect its own workers from exposure to wood dust.

Pendle Woodcraft (Blackburn) Limited failed to implement safe working practices despite earlier interventions from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The company consistently failed to control the accumulation of wood dust at its site in Darwen, Lancashire. Wood dust can cause serious and often irreversible health problems, including dermatitis and when breathed in excessively it can cause asthma and in the case of hardwood dust nasal cancer. Wood dust is also known to be flammable and, in certain situations, can cause a fire or explosion.



HSE inspectors repeatedly identified large amounts of wood dust during visits

HSE provides a range of [guidance on working in the woodworking industry](#), covering the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002; exposure limits; extraction; and health surveillance.

Inspectors from the HSE carried out a series of visits to the company over an eight year period, repeatedly identifying large amounts of wood dust. The first of those visits came in November 2015, when HSE offered advice on the control of wood dust. The site was visited again in April 2019, November 2021, and finally on 5 June 2023, as part of the workplace regulator's [Dust Kills campaign](#), which targeted woodworking businesses due to the significant health risks associated with wood dust.

However, on each of these three occasions inspectors observed excessive amounts of wood dust and served Improvement Notices.



An inspector's boot shows the scale of the wood dust found

Pendle Woodcraft (Blackburn) Limited, Cotton Hall Street Darwen, Lancashire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and were fined £6,000, and ordered to pay costs of £2,926.55 on 15 January 2024 at a hearing in Blackburn Magistrates Court.



Exposure to wood dust can have a significant impact on the health of workers

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Tracy Fox said: "This company repeatedly failed to protect its own workers.

"Wood dust is a substance hazardous to health because it can cause serious non-reversible health problems, including asthma; dermatitis; and irritation to the eyes, nose and throat and all businesses need to protect their workers' respiratory health.

"The expected standard is to control exposure to wood dust to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

"Companies need to be aware that when HSE identifies repeated similar significant failings in the workplace, a prosecution will always be considered."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward and

paralegal officer Helen Hugo.

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## [Fine for Kent timber firm after worker loses three fingers](#)

A company has been fined after an employee had three fingers severed by a panel saw at work.

David Broadway, 36, had been working at Pemberton Timber Frame Limited, a company that manufactures timber frame structures for the construction industry, at its site in Evelyn Way in Ramsgate on the morning of 4 January 2023.

He was operating a panel saw and asked to cut down the thickness of a length of timber – known as a rip cut. This process involved passing a length of timber through the panel saw multiple times as the timber exceeded the depth the blade could cut in one pass.

CCTV footage shows Mr Broadway successfully completing the cut before flipping the length of timber over, but he soon found the second cut much more difficult. He can be seen attempting to feed the timber through the saw and while receiving it from the cut end, his right hand made contact with the saw blade, instantly amputating his index, middle and ring fingers, also cutting his little finger.



Mr Broadway had been operating a panel saw at the time of the incident

Mr Broadway said the accident has massively impacted in aspects of his life.

“I used to do weight lifting, ride my bike and keep active,” he said.

“I used to work a lot with my hands and I am now getting frustrated as I can’t do these things.

“Even normal activities like cooking or taking a shower are a challenge. It makes me feel stressed as I can’t do the everyday activities I used to do.”

Mr Broadway now also struggles to care for his children, including his young son, born after the accident.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that Mr Broadway was asked to complete a task that was not suitable for the machine he was using. Pemberton Timber Frame Ltd had also failed to ensure he received sufficient training or instruction on how to use the panel saw safely, which would have included vital information about the limitations of the saw, guarding and other safety features such as a riving knife and the use of a push stick. The saw riving knife was also absent at the time of the incident.

HSE has clear guidance on [safe woodworking](#) which includes how and when a rip cut is carried out – a panel saw with a circular blade must not be used unless the saw blade, at all times, projects through the upper surface of the material being cut.

The investigation also discovered that the company had appropriate machines to undertake this task safely but Mr Broadway was unaware of this due to his lack of training.

On 8 January 2025, Pemberton Timber Frame Ltd of The Strand, Walmer, Kent



pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 at Sevenoaks Magistrates' court. The company was fined £12,000 order to pay full costs of £4,034.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE principal inspector Ross Carter said: "Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers.

"If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to the incident, the life changing injuries sustained by Mr Broadway would not have happened."

The HSE investigation was conducted by HM inspector Simon Asakura-Cornish and the prosecution brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Samantha Wells, support by paralegal officer David Shore.

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## **Fine for MOT testing centre after child crushed by car**

An MOT Testing centre in Finsbury Park has been fined £10,000 after a child sustained life changing injuries after being hit by a car and crushed.

A 14-year-old was with an adult, sitting down, waiting for an MOT to be conducted at New Auto Tech Limited on 4 May 2022. The chair was situated in front of the brake rollers, however, as the MOT technician attempted to move the car in reverse, the vehicle was driven forwards off the brake rollers, crushing the child against the wall.

The child required immediate hospital treatment, having sustained multiple pelvis fractures. They were off school for over a year and bed bound for

three months following the incident.

There are many known risks associated with the [motor vehicle repair industry](#) and detailed HSE guidance is available.



The child had been sitting down and waiting with an adult for the MOT to be completed

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that New Auto Tech Limited had failed to ensure that members of the public were in a safe area when vehicles were being moved.

The MOT Centre had a designated 'viewing area' to the side of the brake roller bay. This was a painted box on the floor with a chair placed inside it. However there were no protective barriers and the business failed to stop customers from moving out of this area into parts of the workshop where vehicles were moving.

New Auto Tech Limited of Alroy Road, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for its failure to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of those not in its employment. The company was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,810 following a hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court on 10 January 2025.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Michelle Morphy said: "This case sends a clear message to MOT Test Centres that HSE will hold them to account if they fail to protect both workers and members of the public.

"On this occasion, they failed to protect a child, by allowing them to move from their allotted viewing area into an operational area, which should have been restricted to workers only.

"As such the child was seriously injured in a totally avoidable incident."

This HSE prosecution was supported by HM inspector Oscar Dower and brought by enforcement lawyer Jayne Wilson and paralegal officer Lucy Gallagher.

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## **Company fined after dad's legs crushed by 800kg pallet**

A manufacturer in Sheffield has been fined after a steel pallet landed on an employee, leaving him permanently disabled.

The 800kg load crushed Wayne Hatton's legs during a night shift at Amber Precast Ltd's factory on 14 January 2021.

Mr Hatton, from Doncaster, had his right lower leg amputated with two toes on his left foot also being removed following the incident at Davy Business Park.



Wayne (left) and his mother Marine

The pallet was being removed from a reinforced concrete cast when it fell onto the father-of-two, who had only recently been employed by the firm as a supervisor.

The then 46-year-old spent seven weeks in hospital and now has a prosthetic leg after his right lower leg was amputated.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the pallet had not been secured onto the lifting chains of the overhead crane before being removed from the concrete cast. This meant the pallet was not supported whilst being moved.



Wayne (right) and his father Henry

The investigation also found Amber Precast Ltd failed to consistently implement a system of work to ensure the pallet could be removed safely. Mr Hatton, now 50, and other members on his team had not received any information or instructions on how to remove the pallet safely.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Provide information, training and supervision: Overview – HSE](#)

Amber Precast Ltd, of Davy Business Park, Prince Of Wales Road, Sheffield, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £5,406.31 in costs at Sheffield Magistrates' Court on 9 January 2025.

HSE inspector Jane Fox said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided with the correct instruction and implementation of an agreed safe working procedure. Amber Precast Ltd left its employees to work out their own methods of completing the pallet removal task, instead of providing them with suitable training and equipment so it could be done safely every time."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Withell.



Wayne (left) and his eldest son Jayden

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