

# Company fined after death of man whose life was 'unjustly cut short'

A construction company has been fined after a kitchen fitter was crushed to death by a pack of concrete blocks at a site in the Cotswolds.

Martin Dunford, who was 33, was 'very much loved' by his family who say they miss him 'every day' since the incident on 23 January 2020. Martin, from Pocklington in Yorkshire, was killed after being pinned against the side of a lorry loader as two stacks of concrete blocks fell onto him.



Martin Dunford was killed while working on a construction site in the Cotswolds

Martin's sister, Tracey Hunter, provided a statement on behalf of his family.

She said: "Martin went to work and never came home. His life was unjustly cut short.

"Little did he know on that date that he was going to work on a site that had ongoing issues and was not following HSE guidelines for working safely on a construction site.

"Martin was very much loved by his family and friends. He is missed every day and nothing can ever fill the hole that is left by him no longer being here.

"We, his family, and friends are still all navigating throughout this endless period of grief and today's verdict is the start of some sense of justice towards his senseless death."

Martin had been working at Ebrington Rise, near Chipping Campden – a development of 16 three, four and five bedroomed houses being built by Piper Homes Construction Limited.



Martin Dunford was crushed when two stacks of concrete blocks fell on top of him

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Martin had walked around a lorry loader to talk to a driver about how long he would be on site, as he needed access to one of the properties being built. A stack of concrete blocks which had been placed on top of another stack of blocks, which was also supported by a wooden pallet, toppled over onto him, pinning him against the side of the lorry. He sustained severe internal and head injuries and died on site.

Piper Homes Construction Limited, who were the principal contractor on the site, had failed to ensure that a suitable, level storage area was provided for the safe offloading of construction materials. The company had also failed to ensure that wooden pallets in a suitable condition were used for the storage of construction materials and that persons were excluded from delivery areas. [HSE guidance on pallet safety](#) is available.

Piper Homes Construction Limited, which is currently in liquidation, of Lace Market Square, Nottingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015. The company was fined £300,000 and ordered to pay £5,236 in costs at Cheltenham Magistrates Court on 29 April 2025.



The company had also failed to ensure that wooden pallets in a suitable condition were used for the storage of construction materials

HSE inspector James Lucas said: “This was an entirely avoidable incident and our thoughts remain with Martin’s family.

“Storage of construction materials should be properly planned and managed, to ensure that if materials are stored at height the necessary measures are in place to prevent them from falling and potentially injuring persons.

“Storage areas should be level and accessories such as wooden pallets should be regularly inspected to ensure that they are in suitable condition to be used to store materials.

“Had this been done on this particular site, Martin would have returned home safely to his family.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and paralegal officer Jason Dix

#### **Notes to editors:**

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 guidance on pallet safety](#) is available.
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## Farmer fined following death of worker

A Gloucestershire farmer has been fined after the shepherdess he employed was killed in a quad bike crash.

Laura Simmons, was working alone on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023, spraying weed killer along fence lines, using the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) at a farm in Charlton Abbots near Cheltenham.

The overloaded quad bike overturned. The 22-year-old was found by a jogger several hours later.

Laura, described by her mother as “lively, caring and adventurous,” died from fatal spine injuries. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the ATV overturned due to an overloaded front rack, uneven tyre pressure, unstable load from lack of baffles in the spray tank and the potential for the spray lance to be used during movement.



Laura, described by her mother as “lively, caring and adventurous”

Toby Baxter failed to provide suitable equipment, ensure pre-use checks were conducted, implement a system to fill the spray tank, formally train his employees and properly assess the risks.

Laura’s mother paid tribute to her daughter from Shetland, saying: “She was a lively person who loved animals, was very caring, was a hard worker, was plucky, intelligent, practical, adventurous and she had a beautiful smile.”

HSE guidelines emphasise that safety checks for ATVs must include checking tyre pressures, which are crucial for vehicle stability. Even a small 1 psi

difference can cause dangerous control problems. Proper ATV operation requires appropriate training, suitable helmets, and careful route planning. The risk of overturn is significantly higher when carrying loads that destabilise the vehicle, especially on uneven terrain or slopes as these conditions require reduced loads and increased caution.

[Guidance on safe use of all-terrain vehicles \(ATVs\) in agriculture and forestry](#) can be found on HSE website.

Toby Baxter, of Chedworth pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974. He was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £6161.72 costs at a hearing at Cheltenham Magistrates Court on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Emily O'Neill said: "This was a tragic incident, and a much-loved young woman has lost her life. It could have easily been avoided with the right controls in place.

"We found several failures, so Mr Baxter's previous suggestion that Laura was a victim of 'unfortunate circumstances' is, frankly, offensive.

"This prosecution highlights ongoing safety concerns in the agricultural sector, which remains one of Britain's most dangerous industries for workers. Proper equipment, training and risk assessment are essential to protect workers."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and supported by paralegal officer Rebecca Foreman.

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## Window manufacturing company fined after worker seriously injures hand

A window manufacturer has been fined £100,000 after a teenage worker had two fingers severed by a cross-cutting saw.

The 19-year-old was working for Ford Windows Limited at the company's site in Sheffield when the incident occurred.

He had loaded a cross-cut saw with a length of windowsill, which had been stored outside in the rain. As he went to cut the windowsill, his hand slipped off the wet workpiece into the unguarded part of the blade, resulting in severing parts of two fingers on his left hand.



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that the company had not conducted a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the cross-cut saw, failed to identify the need to adjust the nose guard of the saw to minimise the amount of blade exposed, and failed to identify the need to dry the materials before cutting.

The investigation also found that the company also failed to provide suitable information, instruction, and training to employees on working safely for this activity.

Guidance on the machinery safety, including maintaining machinery can be found on the HSE website: [Introduction to machinery safety – HSE](#)

Ford Windows Limited of Catley Road, Darnall, Sheffield pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and received a fine of £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £4227.50.

After the hearing the HM principal inspector Chris Tilley commented: "The company failed in several areas, they had no competent person responsible for health and safety at the site, they failed to conduct a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and therefore did not have a suitable safe system of work for the safe use of the saw, which left the nose guard of the saw incorrectly positioned.

"The company's failure to risk assess meant that they could not communicate information, instruction, and training to their employees on how to use the saw safely.

"If the company had taken the time to risk assess the required controls, to safely use the cross-cut saw, they would have found that suitable measures could have been implemented for zero cost, as the guard was available on the machine and simply needed manually adjusting to guard the blade."

The prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi assisted by paralegal officer Imogen Isaac.

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## [Paddleboard tour leader jailed over deaths of four people](#)

A paddleboard business owner has been jailed for 10 years and six months for gross negligence manslaughter following the deaths of four people in 2021.

Nerys Lloyd, 39, from Aberavon, who was the owner and sole director of Salty Dog Co Ltd, was charged with the gross negligence manslaughter of Paul O'Dwyer, 42, Andrea Powell, 41, Morgan Rogers, 24, and Nicola Wheatley, 40, following their tragic deaths following the incident in Haverfordwest Town Weir on 30 October 2021.

She admitted all four charges on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, along with one count under the Health and Safety at Work Act.





Nerys Lloyd has been jailed for 10 years and six months

At her sentencing, the court heard how on 30 October 2021, Lloyd with the assistance of Paul O'Dwyer planned a trip organised through Lloyd's business.

However, there had been heavy flooding, and severe weather warnings were in place, which were not heeded by Lloyd. The river was running fast, and the weir was in an extremely hazardous condition. Lloyd did not check the weir or provide a safety briefing to the participants nor inform them of the presence of the weir. Despite this, Lloyd facilitated the paddleboarders entering the water and she led the group along the river.

As the group approached the weir, apart from Lloyd, all the participants were pulled over the top into its base and became trapped before being ejected from the weir. Four of the participants survived.

Instructor Mr O'Dwyer, who initially exited the river safely, re-entered the water in an attempt to rescue the others, but was immediately dragged over the top. The four victims died as a result of drowning/immersion.

A joint investigation by Dyfed-Powys Police and HSE found that Lloyd was not correctly qualified to lead a stand-up paddle board river tour.



Haverfordwest Weir

Guidance and training for water sports instructors and participants is



available from national sport governing bodies including the British Stand-Up Paddle Association, British Canoeing and the British Kite Surfing Association. Anyone organising adventure activities for under-18s must be licenced by the Adventure Activities Licencing Authority.

HSE Inspector Helen Turner said: "I would like to express our sincere sympathy to the families of those who died, and to the survivors whose lives are indelibly affected.

"Four lives were needlessly lost and survivors traumatised by their experience at Haverfordwest weir.

"Nerys Lloyd was solely responsible for the decision to enter the water while the river was in flood, and for the attempt to take even inexperienced paddlers over the weir. This was completely reckless and the risk of death was foreseeable.

"The victims placed their trust in Lloyd to deliver a safe and enjoyable paddle, but through her incompetence, carelessness and complacency she failed to plan or assess the obvious risk at the weir or to take even basic safety measures. By not discussing the hazards on the route Lloyd robbed the participants of the opportunity to make a reasoned decision on their own participation on the day.

"Health and safety law is not a barrier to adventurous activities, which are enjoyed by people every day in safety. Organisers must take proportionate action to recognise and manage real risks."

Senior Investigating Officer Detective Superintendent Cameron Ritchie, of Dyfed-Powys Police, said: "Firstly, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt sympathies to the families of Paul, Andrea, Morgan and Nicola.

"The incident that took place in Haverfordwest on October 30, 2021, was an extremely tragic case resulting in the completely avoidable deaths of four people. We heard in court how this incident devastated four families, and we hope that lessons will be learned that prevent this from ever happening again.

"This has been a complex and extensive investigation and I'd like to thank my colleagues at Dyfed-Powys Police, The Health and Safety Executive and the Crown Prosecution Service for their professionalism and diligence to secure this outcome."

The HSE investigation and enforcement was supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Kate Harney and Paralegal Officer Helen Jacob.

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3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE guidance on managing health and safety for leisure and sporting activities can be found at [Basics for leisure activities](#).
5. Guidance on Adventure Activities Licensing can be found at [Adventure activities licensing – HSE](#).
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## **Council fined after man falls while installing town's Christmas tree**

- 20-foot tree toppled during Bury Market installation
- HSE has well-established guidance on safely working at height

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council has been fined £200,000 after a man was injured while installing the town's Christmas tree.

Council employee James Lyth was using a scissor lift to straighten the 20-foot tall Christmas tree when it toppled over with him still in the basket.



The tree was being installed by an external company at Bury Market on 21 November 2022, in time for the town's annual festivities at Christmas shopping destination.

The 32-year-old operations manager suffered concussion and severe injuries to his right-hand side, including bruising to his ribs. He needed an operation to his leg and was left using a wheelchair and crutches after sustaining a large cut to his leg. Mr Lyth was off work for two months and was subsequently only able to return on restricted hours and duties as he continued his recovery.

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

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Bury Metropolitan Borough Council had failed to provide Mr Lyth with any training in the safe operation of the scissor lift and had failed carry out a sufficient risk assessment for this work activity.

The investigation also found that a suitable risk assessment of the work would have identified the dangers involved and the need to restrict the use of scissor lifts to those with appropriate training.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The organisation was fined £200,000 and were ordered to pay costs at a hearing at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 2 April 2025.

HSE inspector Leanne Ratcliffe said: "This was a very serious incident.

"It is important for industry to understand the importance of a risk assessment and training when using elevated platforms. Access to these platforms should be limited to those trained and anyone who isn't trained shouldn't be allowed to use them.

"If this sort of work is not planned and controlled to a high degree, then there is a very high likelihood of a potentially fatal fall, or one resulting in very serious injury."

The prosecutions were supported by HSE enforcement lawyer Julian White and paralegal officer Hannah Snelling.

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to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).

5. Guidance on [working safely at height](#), and [with elevated platforms](#) is available.