

School trust fined after member of public hit by falling tree branch

A school academy trust has been fined and a man given a suspended prison sentence after a member of the public was hit by a falling tree branch.

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust and gardening services provider Nicolas Thépot (trading as 'The Green Yem') both pleaded guilty to health and safety breaches following the incident, which left a 68 year-old with serious injuries.

Gillian Gardner had been walking her dog on the pavement along West Road in Newcastle when she was hit by the falling branch, which, as a result of the impact, knocked her on to the road and into the path of incoming traffic.



Thépot continued working on the tree the very next day with the only change being that some cones and tape were placed on to the pavement.

The incident took place on 9 August 2022. Thépot had been contracted by the trust to fell two trees in the grounds of St Cuthberts Catholic High School on Gretna Road. He and a young apprentice set about the work and having climbed one of the trees, Thépot was using a chainsaw to remove branches and sections of the trunk. He had been using a rope to tie to the branches to be removed, with his young apprentice tasked with pulling each one inside the school boundary as they fell.

However, it was during this operation that the rope snapped, causing both it and the falling branch to crash into Mrs Gardner and her dog.

In a statement, she said her ordeal had left her unable to leave the house for several weeks, with the injuries sustained including several broken ribs.

"It probably took about a year to totally recover she said.

"I still can't carry anything heavy.

"I feel like it has all been downhill since my accident and I've lost confidence in what I can and can't do.

“I haven’t been able to return to my weekly swimming I was used to before the accident.

“My dog has been very therapeutic for me and we’re inseparable.”



Thépot had no training or qualifications in arboriculture or use of chainsaws

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Thépot had no training or qualifications in arboriculture or in the use of chainsaws. He was using an unsafe method to fell the tree, by carrying out aerial chainsaw work above the open footpath and road.

The investigation also found Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust had made no checks on Thépot’s experience, competence or qualifications. The trust had not checked how he intended to do the work in advance of awarding the contract, made no check on the method used during the work, and did not stop the work after the incident.

In fact, Thépot continued working on the tree the very next day using the same method. The only change made was that some cones and tape were placed on to the pavement. There was no way around the coned off area for pedestrians without stepping into the busy road, nor was there any signage in place to indicate risk. Members of the public were still walking underneath the tree while Thépot was working with a chainsaw – with the risk not immediately obvious to members of the public from the path. The trust did not attempt to stop him working in this manner despite the obvious risks and the incident the previous day.

The work was only stopped when HSE inspectors became aware of the incident, arrived on the scene, and served prohibition notices on both the trust and Thépot.



The rope being used to tie to branches snapped during the tree felling work

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, pleaded guilty to breaching their duty under section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to conduct their undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in their employment are not exposed to risks to their health or safety. It was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £4,344 in costs at Newcastle Upon Tyne Magistrates Court on 17 April 2025.

Nicolas Thépot, (of Netherwitton Way, Newcastle upon Tyne) as a self-employed person, failed to discharge his duties under section 3(2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure persons not being his employees are not exposed to risks to their health or safety. He pleaded guilty at South Tyneside Magistrates Court on 7 May 2025 and was given a 12 week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months. He must also complete 100 hours of unpaid work and ordered to pay £1,000 towards the prosecution costs.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Stephen Garner said: "This incident was completely avoidable had the tree been felled by a safe method with controls put in place to protect members of the public from being struck by falling branches.

"It is particularly concerning that, in this case, the work continued by the same method the very next day, even after a member of the public was injured.

"This prosecution demonstrates HSE will not hesitate to take action against those who put the public at risk through unsafe work methods."

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 can be found [here](#).

[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:

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 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](#).
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April 2025 – A roundup of HSE’s top stories

April saw a number of significant stories from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), with multiple major prosecutions, including the workplace regulator bringing one of its most complex and lengthy investigations to a conclusion resulting in a £6million fine.

We also prosecuted a health board in Wales, a large chemical manufacturing company, as well as a local council after a man was seriously injured installing a Christmas tree.

And HSE was involved in the prosecution of a former police officer, who was jailed for more than ten years after the deaths of four paddleboarders.

Council fined for multiple failures on Guided Busway

Cambridgeshire County Council was fined £6 million after pleading guilty to serious [safety failings on its Guided Busway](#) that led to three deaths and multiple injuries over a ten-year period.

The prosecution follows a long and complex Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation, where incidents continued to happen despite regular enforcement action from the regulator.



The council chose to appeal enforcement action instead of acting on concerns.

You can read more here: [Council fined for multiple failures on Guided Busway – HSE Media Centre](#)

Health Board fined for failing to manage patients risk of falling

We started off the month by prosecuting [Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board](#), who was fined £250,000 following failures relating to patient falls in its hospitals.

Three elderly patients sustained falls in 2022 and 2023, all of which

resulted in fatalities. The cause of death of two of them was identified as being as a direct result of falling.

Richard Hughes, 84 and Gwilym Williams, 74, fell at Ysybty Gwynedd in Bangor in January and June 2022 respectively, while Nancy Read, who was 93, fell at Wrexham Maelor Hospital in January 2023.

You can read more about this case here: [Health Board fined for failing to manage patients risk of falling – HSE Media Centre](#).

Paddleboard tour leader jailed over deaths of four people

A paddleboard business owner [was 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.



Nerys Lloyd has been jailed for 10 years and six months

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.

You can read more here: [Paddleboard tour leader jailed over deaths of four people – HSE Media Centre](#)

Council fined after man falls while installing town's Christmas tree

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council was 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.



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

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

You can read more about the case here: [Council fined after man falls while installing town's Christmas tree – HSE Media Centre](#)

Company fined £2.5m following uncontrolled acid releases

A chemical manufacturing company was [fined £2.5m following two incidents of uncontrolled releases](#) of highly corrosive acids at its site in West Thurrock, Essex.

Industrial Chemicals Ltd pleaded guilty following the incidents in 2020, one of which caused the release of a hydrogen chloride gas cloud that resulted in schools in the area to close.



CCTV footage shows the atmosphere being engulfed in the cloud within 60 seconds

That incident saw the release of three hundred thousand litres of hydrochloric acid via poorly maintained pipework. As it came into contact with the atmosphere, this created a hydrogen chloride gas cloud which spread to nearby towns.

You can read more here: [Company fined £2.5m following uncontrolled acid releases – HSE Media Centre](#)

Defence company fined £800,000 after man shot on MoD range

[A defence technology company was fined £800,000](#) after an employee was shot during testing of ammunition at a Ministry of Defence (MoD) range in South Wales.

The father-of-two was left paralysed below the shoulders after being shot by a 5.56mm bullet fired from a gun, 570 metres away.



The bullet was fired from a gun more than 500 metres away

The incident happened on 25 March 2021 during a NATO ammunition quality assurance trial at the MoD Ranges in Pendine.

You can read the full story here: [Defence company fined £800,000 after man shot on MoD range – HSE Media Centre](#)

Builder sentenced for unlicensed asbestos removal

A builder was fined after carrying out [unlicensed asbestos removal work](#) at a house in Cheadle, Manchester.

Gavin Mutch, trading as G Mutch Developments, had been contracted to carry out renovations at the property including roofing work.

Despite being warned by the customer that asbestos was potentially present in the fascia boards, Mr Mutch proceeded to remove the asbestos-containing materials on 8 September 2022.

Our investigation found Mr Mutch had carried out unlicensed and therefore illegal asbestos removal work. This type of work should only be undertaken by a licensed asbestos contractor with appropriate safety controls in place.

You can read more here: [Builder sentenced for unlicensed asbestos removal –](#)

April is Stress Awareness Month: tackle stress in the workplace with five steps in five weeks

During April, Britain's bosses were invited to follow five simple steps to [prevent and reduce stress in their workplace](#).

Over the course of the month, employers were encouraged to focus on one of the campaign's 5 Rs for each of the five weeks. They are: to **Reach out** and have conversations, **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress, **Respond** to any risks you've identified, **Reflect** on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it **Routine**.

You can read more here: [April is Stress Awareness Month: tackle stress in the workplace with five steps in five weeks – HSE Media Centre](#)

Further information:

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[Fine for company and director after employee dies from fall through roof](#)

- HSE guidance says all work at height must be properly planned

A cladding company and its director have been fined following the death of a worker who fell through a fragile roof whilst replacing cladding panels.

The 61-year-old was working for Camclad Contractors Limited, replacing cladding panels on a former abattoir that had been damaged in a storm, when the incident took place at Gaerwen Industrial Estate, Anglesey, on 24 January 2018.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the work had only been planned from photographs and that no site visit had taken place before starting the work. The dimensions of the building were not known to

the contractor. This meant the cherry picker hired to allow safe access to height did not reach all parts of the structure that were to be repaired.

To complete the work, workers had to leave the safety of the cherry picker basket and used boards found on site to work on the fragile roof. It was whilst doing this that slipped and fell through the fragile roof, landing on the concrete floor below.

Employers and those in control of any work at height activity must make sure work is properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people. HSE has guidance on [working at height](#) which includes using the right type of equipment for working at height.

Speaking after the case HSE principal inspector Damian Corbett said: "Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information and instruction to their workers in the safe system of working.

"If the work had been adequately planned, it would have provided a suitable safe system of work and prevented the risk of falls through fragile materials. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those who fall below the required standards."

Camclad Contractors Limited of Wyboston Lakes, Great North Road, Wyboston, Bedfordshire pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and been fined £225,000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000.

A director of the company, Dominic Lakeman-Pettit also of Great North Road, Wyboston, Bedfordshire pleaded guilty to breaching section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was sentenced to four months in prison suspended for 12 months and ordered to carry out 200 hours unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay costs of £1,000.

Notes to Editors

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Innovative workplace safety designs win MSD risk reduction awards

Two UK companies have been honoured for their innovative workplace safety designs that reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in their operations.

Ainscough Crane Hire has won the **MSD Risk Reduction through Design Award 2024/25**, while **UPM Raflatac Ltd** has received the **Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) Recognition Award**. Both awards, sponsored by the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** and the **Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF)**, were presented at CIEHF's annual awards ceremony on 28 April 2025.

Ainscough Crane Hire developed a specialised brake and hub assembly tool set that eliminates the need for workers to manually handle heavy components weighing up to 52kg during crane maintenance. Previously, plant fitters had to adopt awkward postures in restricted spaces beneath crane wheel arches, placing significant stress on their lower backs.

"Taking the strain out of crane maintenance has been a priority for us," said an Ainscough Crane Hire spokesperson.

"Our maintenance and engineering colleagues collaborated to design a solution that eliminates the need to handle brake and hub assembly components."

A worker at Ainscough Crane Hire added: "The new tools mean brake inspections are much easier to carry out. There is no need to lift the heavy drums by hand, which previously took two people."

UPM Raflatac Ltd, based in Scarborough, created an ingenious trolley system for handling heavy paper reels weighing between 20kg and 90kg. The solution was proposed by a worker to eliminate manual lifting and stacking of offcut reels.

"Our solution was truly collaborative," said a UPM Raflatac spokesperson. "A worker proposed an initial idea, and our in-house production and engineering departments worked together to design a solution that would transform our handling processes."

Chris Quarrie, Chartered Ergonomist and Human Factors specialist and chair of this year's judging panel, said: "We applaud both Ainscough Crane Hire and UPM Raflatac for their contributions towards reducing workplace MSD risks to their workers. These awards demonstrate how MSD risks can be designed out of daily work activities."

Iris Mynott from CIEHF added: "Through these recognitions, we highlight the impactful contributions of businesses in advancing workplace safety. Congratulations to our winners and all the entrants for their dedication to ergonomic improvements."

For further details on the winners and their innovative designs, visit:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/msd-awards.htm>

Further information:

1. For more information on the award winners visit:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/msd-awards.htm>.
2. More information about Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF) can be found here: <https://ergonomics.org.uk/>.
3. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>.