

Health board and company director sentenced after worker suffers life-changing injuries

A Cardiff-based health board and the director of a maintenance company have today been sentenced after a worker fell from height, suffering life-changing injuries.

Cardiff Crown Court heard how, on 22 September 2016, Christopher Rees, employed by W D Rees Maintenance Ltd, was undertaking window cleaning at the Women's Services Unit of the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. Mr Rees was using suspended access equipment when he fell from the end of the beam supporting him as there was no end stop fitted, suffering significant and life-changing injuries including a broken back.



An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Wayne Daniel Rees, as the director of W D Rees Maintenance Ltd, had failed to effectively plan the work at height task. He did not undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment or ensure that a safe system of work was in place for

cleaning the windows. He made no arrangements to ensure the task was effectively supervised and also failed to ensure that there were suitable trained staff, safe equipment and a suitable rescue plan in place.

The investigation also found Cardiff and Vale University Health Board failed to effectively manage their contractors. They did not undertake suitable checks to ensure W D Rees Maintenance Ltd were competent to carry out such work or ensure a suitable risk assessment or safe system of work was in place. They provided the beam, a piece of lifting equipment, which was used to support Christopher Rees but failed to ensure it had been examined to ensure it was safe for use.

Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board of The University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 of Health and Safety At Work Act 1974 and has been fined £400,000 and ordered to pay £15,845.90 in costs.

Wayne Daniel Rees of Gallamuir Road, Cardiff pleaded guilty to breaching Section 4 (1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and received a six month jail sentence suspended for 12 months and has been disqualified from being a company director for five years.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Gethyn Jones commented:

“Dutyholders must ensure that all work at height activities are properly planned, appropriately supervised and undertaken in a safe manner. It is essential that companies employing contractors do not simply rely on the knowledge and experience of the contractor but make reasonably practicable checks themselves to ensure work is safely completed.”

Notes to Editors:

1. 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. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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