

Horticulture company fined after lorry driver suffers life changing injuries

A horticulture company has been fined £3,000 after a lorry driver suffered third degree burns on his body while making a delivery to a site in Essex.

The man had been delivering a load of hardcore aggregate to Plants Galore Horticulture Limited's Eagle Nursery in Hamlet Hill, Roydon. His lorry had a tipper and grab arm and after tipping the load, struck 11kV overhead power lines which ran across the yard.

He exited the cab, believing he had struck a telephone cable, and in doing so received an electric shock while holding the handle of the door, when his feet touched the ground. He suffered third degree burns on his body and required multiple skin grafts for injuries to his right forearm, right and left foot, and just above his right knee. He also had exposed tendons in his right forearm and had amputations of the fourth and fifth toes on his left foot.



Essex Police took this photograph at the scene showing where the vehicle struck the overhead power line

Accidental contact with live overhead power lines kills people and causes many serious injuries each year. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has guidance [about to how to plan and manage work near overhead powerlines](#).

A HSE investigation found that Plants Galore Horticulture Limited had failed to provide information and instructions on risks, including locations of overhead power lines and what precautions to take. The company failed to erect ground-level barriers to establish a safety zone to keep people and

machinery away from the powerlines. An exclusion zone of 3 metres around the 11kV wires should also have been adhered to.



Scorch marks on the ground can be seen on the ground where the incident happened

Plants Galore Horticulture Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Section 4(2) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £3,000 and was ordered to pay £4,000 costs at a hearing at Chelmsford Magistrates' Court on 28 March 2024.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Connor Stowers said: "Employers should make sure they properly assess and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from striking overhead powerlines.

"If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to this incident, the life changing injuries sustained by the worker could have been prevented."

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.
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. Guidance [about to how to plan and manage work near overhead powerlines](#) is available.