

Metal polishing company fined after employee's hand crushed in machinery

A metal polishing company in Oldbury has been fined following an incident in which an employee's hand became entangled in an unguarded tube polishing machine, resulting in the amputation of one finger and severe crushing injuries to two others.

Nathan Watkins was working for FMP West Midlands Limited in Oldbury, West Midlands, on 8 July 2024, when he was loading a tube polishing machine. The machine had faulty rollers, which required Mr Watkins to lean over and straighten the metal tubes. As he did so, his left hand became entangled in the machine's unguarded cogs and chains.

Mr Watkins' left ring finger was severed to the first knuckle, his middle finger was crushed requiring an operation to have a metal rod inserted, and his index finger was crushed, requiring multiple surgeries. The 35-year-old has undergone eight surgeries and requires further operations. He has been unable to return to work since the incident.

Mr Watkins said: "I have gained some strength back in my hand, but it is very tender and painful."

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that FMP West Midlands Limited failed to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery, namely the rotating cogs and chains on the rollers.



Tube polishing machine

HSE provides clear guidance under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 on preventing access to dangerous parts of machinery. The first consideration should be physically enclosing the dangerous part with fixed guards to prevent access, which should be securely attached and not easily removed. Further guidance can be found at HSE's website: [Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22](#)

FMP West Midlands Limited, of Rood End Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined £24,000 and ordered to pay a £2000 victim surcharge and £4,073.10 in costs at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on Friday 5 December.

HSE inspector, Taila Phelan, said: "This incident was entirely preventable.

There is clear and long-standing guidance on machinery guarding to prevent access to dangerous parts. The failure to maintain proper guarding standards is not acceptable and too many workers are still being injured by machinery due to employers not taking the necessary steps to protect their employees.

"The tube polishing machine was not up to safety standards. Had FMP West Midlands Limited installed suitable guarding, this life-changing injury would not have occurred.

"The fine imposed should send a clear message to industry that HSE will not hesitate to take enforcement action against those who fail to comply with health and safety regulations."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Edward Parton and paralegal officer Jorge Kemp.

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. Relevant guidance can be found here [Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22](#))
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 can be found [here](#).