

MOT centre sentenced after worker fatally injured in oil drum explosion

An MOT centre has been sentenced after oil drums supplied by them exploded and killed an agricultural engineer.

Luton Magistrates' Court heard how on 21 April 2017, Christopher Chatfield, an experienced agricultural engineer, was making metal pheasant feeders for the local game shoot at Puddock Down Warboys, Cambridgeshire. This involved converting empty 200 litre oil containers by cutting open the lids using a plasma torch. While cutting open the third drum it violently exploded resulting in fatal injuries to Mr Chatfield.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the empty drums, labelled as having contained motor oil, were found to have also previously contained highly flammable gasoline, but had not been labelled correctly. The residual gasoline vapour present within the drums violently ignited upon the action of the hot cutting process, causing fatal injuries to Mr Chatfield. There was a failure to provide any labelling to show that the empty motor oil drums had been repurposed to store gasoline and this created a risk of fire and or explosion.

Stonehill MOT Centre Ltd of Stockley Meadows, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 6(1)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £80,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,167.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Parmjit Gahir said: "Those who are involved in the sale or supply of an article or substance, in this case used oil drums, have a responsibility to ensure that adequate information is provided so that the person buying the article can ensure that it can be safely used, cleaned and maintained.

"Failure to provide any labelling information on the used drums, to show that they had also contained gasoline, did not allow for the necessary precautions to be considered and adopted when cutting the drums open. If appropriate labelling had been in place this incident could have been avoided."

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

4. Hot work on small tanks and drums [Hot work on small tanks and drums \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
5. Storage of flammable liquids in containers [The storage of flammable liquids in containers – HSG51 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

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