

Nottingham builder spared jail after gas explosion injures worker

A Nottingham builder has avoided an immediate spell behind bars after his failures resulted in a gas explosion leaving a worker with burns so serious, he has been unable to work since.

Barry Newman, the sole trader of Foster Brother Builders, was given a 12-month suspended sentence and told to complete 240 hours of unpaid work.

Mr Newman had contracted a Nottingham man to carry out refurbishment works on a property in Bulwell. As part of those works, Newman, 58, had placed a faulty portable space heater, connected to a propane gas (LPG) cylinder, in the property's cellar to dry out damp.

However, on 22 November 2022, a gas leak from the heater resulted in a violent explosion – causing the 51-year-old man to suffer severe burn injuries to his hands, legs, face and scalp. Footage taken by a member of the public in the immediate aftermath shows the extent of the damage caused to the property, with explosion debris also being propelled onto the pavement and residential road, putting members of the public at risk.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Newman failed to carry out a risk assessment and provide suitable and adequately maintained equipment for the work being undertaken.

The manufacturer's instructions for the type of heater used clearly state that it is only for use in well-ventilated areas and that LPG cylinders should not be kept below ground. This is because the gas is heavier than air and will collect at the lower level if there is a leak. HSE guidance states that employers should ensure that work equipment is used only for operations for which, and under conditions for which, it is suitable. Further guidance can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm>

Barry Newman of The Quay, Beeston Marina, Nottingham pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(3) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. At Nottingham Magistrates' Court on 19 June 2025 he was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, suspended for two years, was ordered to complete 240 hours of unpaid work in the community, and required to pay costs of £2,000.

HSE Inspector Roy Poulter said: "This gas explosion has left one man unable to work due to the seriousness of the injuries sustained and it could have easily resulted in someone losing their life.

"This case should serve as a strong reminder to those in the building trade on the dangers of working with gas and the need to assess the risk, and just how serious both HSE and the courts take failures like this.

"HSE will take action against those who do not do all that they can to keep people safe."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Samantha Wells.

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 on provision and use of work equipment 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](#).