

Polymer distribution company in court after worker's fingers severed

A polymer distribution company has been fined after an employee's hand was trapped in machinery whilst attempting to remove a blockage.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how, on the 12 October 2018, an employee of Albis (UK) Ltd was filling an autoloader machine when a blockage occurred in the chute, preventing the product from dropping into the mixer. The employee opened the mixer in order to insert their hand into the chute to remove the blockage, at which point, the butterfly valve was released. This caused the index finger of their right hand to be trapped resulting in the loss of the tip of the index finger below the first joint and the tip of his middle finger above the first joint.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that the company had made alterations to the roof area of the premises sometime before the incident. Due to these, the length of the chute had had to be decreased making access to dangerous parts of the machine possible. A risk assessment had not been carried out subsequent to the shortening of the chute, neither had operatives been fully instructed on how to unblock the autoloader. The machine had also been reconfigured unbeknown to the safety manager, allowing the valve to continue moving when the interlock had been broken. The machine should have cut out when the mixer lid was opened, but it failed to do so, resulting in the incident.

Albis (UK) Ltd of Montgomery Way, Parkgate Industrial Estate, Knutsford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £33,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,684.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Martin Heywood said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks and put in safe system of works for the operation of all machinery. Employers should also ensure that adequate information, instruction and training is provided to all who use it."

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: [Why is machinery safety important?](#)
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>