

Scottish Water authority fined after lone worker fell through insecure flooring

Scottish Water Ltd has been fined after an employee, working alone at night, fell through insecure flooring into a storm channel and was seriously injured suffering life threatening and lifelong debilitating injuries.



Edinburgh Sheriff Court heard how, on 9 June 2017, an employee of Scottish Water entered into the screen well area at Prestonpans Pumping Station and fell through the insecure floor panels into a sewage filled storm channel some 3.1 metres below.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the main causal factor was an unfixed floor which had become dislodged by floodwaters leaving gaps in it and creating an unsafe working environment. The custom and practice that had existed for over 10 years was simply to work around the gaps in the floor, created when displaced by floodwaters, until they could be recovered and refitted. There was no risk assessment or safe system of work for these activities. It was readily foreseeable that someone would eventually fall.

Scottish Water, (Headquarters address) of Pitreavie Castle, Dunfermline pled guilty to breaching Regulation 3(1)(a) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £140,000.

After the hearing, HSE inspector, Kathy Gostick, said: "Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known.

"Scottish Water had identified good control measures for work at height risks companywide but had not adequately identified where they should be implemented resulting in this serious accident which could so easily have been a fatality. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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>

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