

Skiing company fined after boy was killed at friend's birthday party

An indoor skiing company in Tamworth has been fined £100,000 following the death of a schoolboy.

Twelve-year-old Louis Watkiss had been at a tobogganing birthday party at the Snowdome in Tamworth on 24 September 2021. He was descending the main ski slope on a toboggan when it slid into the back of a member of staff who was conducting a slope walk. He fell backwards onto Louis who sadly died at the scene from head injuries.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Snowdome Limited failed to ensure the safety of its customers, including Louis, while they were undertaking tobogganing at the venue.



The indoor slope at Tamworth Snowdome

The HSE investigation also found that Snowdome Limited did not have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for tobogganing activities and had not fully considered all persons likely to be on the slope during tobogganing. As a result, there was no safe system of work, information, instruction, training or supervision to manage the risk of collisions between toboggans and pedestrians.

Nathan Cook, senior enforcement lawyer for HSE said: "Louis went to a friend's birthday party at the Snowdome and should have returned home safely to his family after an enjoyable occasion.

"Tragically, due to the failings of Snowdome Limited, this did not happen. Louis's death could have been prevented if the company had adequately assessed and controlled the risks associated with tobogganing activities.

"This should act as a reminder that venues and employers must ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place and employees are provided with sufficient safe systems of work, information, instructions, training, and supervision.

- Employers are required by law to protect both their employees and others

from harm and assessing the risk is just one part of the overall process and [HSE guidance is available to explain what steps should be taken](#).



The indoor slope at Tamworth Snowdome

Nathan Cook continued: “Our risk assessment guidance may be more commonly used for workplaces such as factories and construction sites, but the same principles apply for busy venues like indoor ski slopes. The possible risks to people from equipment and the movement of visitors and staff needs to be thought through.

“Our thoughts remain with Louis’ family.”

Snowdome Limited, of Leisure Island, River Drive, Tamworth, Staffordshire, pleaded guilty at Telford Magistrates’ Court to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (‘the Act’). At a hearing on 26 February, they were fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £14,534.

The HSE investigation into this incident was carried out by HM inspector Keeley Eves, with the support of visiting officer Natalka Heath.

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. 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](#).
5. HSE guidance about [managing and assessing risks](#) is available.