

# Man thought he was 'going to die' after electric shock from overhead powerline

- Dramatic CCTV footage captures moment tree surgeon suffers electric shock.
- He had been part of team of three clearing vegetation on busy road in Wiltshire.
- Lighting tower he was pushing made contact with 11,000 volt overhead powerline.

CCTV shows the dramatic moment a tree surgeon suffered a powerful electric shock from an overhead powerline while carrying out maintenance to hedges on a busy road near Royal Wootton Bassett.

Shortly after midnight on 19 January 2024, Joshua Pocknell was working as part of a team of three on the A3102 when the mobile lighting tower he was pushing made contact with an overhead powerline.

The 26-year-old described the moment the lighting tower hit the overhead powerlines and that he 'couldn't let go of it'.

"My whole body locked and I felt hot and cramping, he said.

"I could hear the electricity in my head and thought I was going to die.

"I hit the floor and passed out, still cramping.

"I later discovered a hole had burnt through my arm and hip all the way to the bone."

He had sustained life-threatening injuries and was rushed to hospital, where he spent the next five weeks.

"My injuries were complex and challenging and there were five or six different surgeons involved in my treatment, he added.

"I still experience considerable pain and strange bodily sensations, including nerve pain and itching.

"This incident has torn the life from beneath me and I don't think I will be able to return to the job that I used to love."

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found employer Upton Specialist Tree Services had requested a permit to carry out the work of a night time from Wiltshire Council. It had been decided to do

the work after dark due to the needs of traffic flow as the A3102 acted as a diversion for M4.

However, the company had failed to adequately plan for or risk assess the dangers posed by overhead power lines. The company did not implement suitable control measures, such as barriers, instruction or training in operating the mobile lighting tower. Overhead powerlines had not been properly assessed or controlled,

particularly following the change to night time working requiring the use of a mobile lighting tower.

HSE guidance states that employers must identify and assess the risks from overhead power lines, particularly where equipment capable of reaching them is used. Workers should be provided with suitable information, instruction and training on the safe use of such equipment, including maintaining safe clearance distances. Work should be properly planned, supervised and reviewed if working methods change. Further guidance is available on our website – [Overhead power lines – HSE](#).

Upton Specialised Tree Services Ltd, of Horton Heath, Wimborne, pleaded guilty to the charge of breaching Regulation 14 of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 by virtue of Regulation 3. The company was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £6,237 in costs at Bristol Magistrates' Court on 1 May 2026.

**HSE inspector Tom Preston said:**

“Joshua is lucky to be alive.

“Overhead electrical power lines present extreme risks to workers, but the risks can and must be controlled.

“Work near overhead power lines should only be carried out where it can be done safely, following a suitable risk assessment, the use of barriers or safety zones, and proper training on the equipment being used.

“In this case, a worker sustained severe injuries in a traumatic incident for all concerned that was entirely preventable.

“HSE will take action against those who fail to take the steps necessary to protect people at work.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Karen Park, Rowena Goodwin as the prosecution advocate and Gabrielle O'Sullivan as the paralegal officer.

**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 can be found here – [Overhead power lines – HSE](#).
  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](#).
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## [Cardiff University fined £280,000 after two employees develop occupational asthma](#)

- Two employees developed occupational asthma after prolonged exposure to animal allergens.
- Both are now permanently disabled; one was unable to continue in their role.
- HSE found the university failed to identify and control the risks for over 15 years.

Cardiff University has been fined £280,000 after two employees developed occupational asthma because of exposure to animal allergens in the workplace.

Britain's workplace regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that between 2008 to 2025, the university failed in its duty to identify and implement suitable controls to prevent employees' exposure to animal allergens. Both employees affected are now permanently disabled as a result, and one was unable to continue in their employment.

**In a statement, one of the affected employees said:**

"I was diagnosed with occupational asthma and occupational rhinitis, and my lung function has been permanently decreased by 33 percent.

"As a result, my breathing has been terrible, and I struggle walking any distance. Going upstairs is really difficult. I have to take steroid inhaler, a nasal spray and a bronchodilator throughout the day as I need it.

"I become breathless when having long conversations and I am unable to walk and talk at the same time anymore."

HSE's investigation found that Cardiff University had failed to put in place adequate measures to protect workers from exposure to animal allergens, despite relevant legislation being in place since 1989 under the [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations \(COSHH\)](#), and specific guidance

relating to [laboratory animal workers](#) being available since 2011.

Occupational asthma is a recognised work-related disease that can have serious and permanent consequences. Employers working with animals or other biological agents must assess and control the risks of exposure to allergens and ensure appropriate protective measures are in place.

Cardiff University pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The university was fined £280,000 and ordered to pay £11,745 in costs at Cardiff Magistrates' Court on 30 April 2026.

**After the hearing, HSE inspector Janet Hensey said:**

“This was a case of Cardiff University completely failing to identify the risk to employees working with animals and not putting suitable controls in place to prevent exposure.

“The fact this went on unchecked for 15 years is truly concerning.

“Occupational asthma is a recognised work-related disease with potentially disabling consequences.

“HSE will not hesitate to take action against organisations, which do not do all that they can to keep people safe.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Daniel Poole and paralegal officer Helen Jacob.

**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 & places and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
  2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available. Additionally, specific to this case here: [The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005](#).
  3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) are available.
  4. Guidance can be found here: [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) – HSE](#) and here: [Laboratory animal worker – HSE](#)
  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 in England can be found [here](#) and those for Scotland [here](#).
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# Tissue manufacturer fined after worker injured hand unblocking machine

- 24-year-old worker suffered serious damage to his hand following the incident.
- HSE investigation found machine blockages were commonplace and company hadn't acted on 2021 risk assessment
- HSE guidance makes clear importance of safe isolation procedures before unblocking machinery.

A tissue manufacturing company has been fined after an employee was seriously injured while clearing a machine blockage at its factory in Blackburn.

The 24-year-old, a lead machine operator, was working for WEPA Professional UK Limited at its premises on Waterfall Street on 31 March 2024. During the manufacturing process, a tissue blockage occurred in the rollers of the machine and the worker instructed his colleague to 'jog' the machine while he cleared the paper by hand.

- Jogging – also known as inching – refers to the momentary energisation of a motor to move it in small, precise increments, only while the operator holds down a button.

However, as the man did this, his right hand became trapped in the roller. Although he managed pull his hand out of the machine, he had sustained crushing injuries to it.



The man had been attempting to clear a tissue blockage in the rollers of the machine

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that tissue blockages were a regular occurrence at the factory, happening around 2-3 times a day. However, there was also no safe system of work in place for unblocking the tissue and the risk assessment in place at the time of the

incident, which had last been reviewed in 2021, identified that formal safe operating procedures were needed to reduce risk, but this was never actioned by the company.

HSE guidance on [safe use of work equipment](#) highlights the importance of following safe isolation and lock-off procedures before carrying out any maintenance or unblocking work on machinery. Employers must ensure that equipment is properly isolated from all power sources and that systems are regularly monitored and reviewed to prevent inadvertent contact with dangerous parts of machinery.

WEPA Professional UK Limited, of Waterfall Street, Blackburn, pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 etc. The company was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,107 at Burnley Magistrates Court on 29 April 2026.

**HSE principal inspector Emily Osborne said:**

“A young worker was left with a serious injury as a result of an accident which could easily have been avoided.

“There was no safe system of work in place for the task as well as a lack of instructions and training to ensure workers knew how to carry out the task safely.

“Instead, the firm’s failures led to the man suffering a severe injury to his right hand.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and supported by paralegal officer Hannah Snelling.

**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 can be found here – [Safe use of work equipment – HSE](#).
  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](#).
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# Recreational diving instructor fined after falsifying HSE diving medical certificate

- Diving instructor used falsified medical certificate to seek employment
- Document was identified and reported by a local diving school
- HSE warns it will take action against misuse of safety-critical certification

A recreational diving instructor has been fined after falsifying a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commercial diving medical certificate.

Stuart Elmes, of Bournemouth, falsified the certificate while seeking employment as a PADI instructor in March 2025. The document was identified by a local diving school and subsequently reported to HSE.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), supported by the Approved Medical Examiners of Divers (AMED) board, confirmed that the certificate had been falsified.

Commercial divers must hold a valid medical certificate issued by an HSE-approved doctor to confirm they are fit to dive. This is a legal requirement under the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 and is a critical safeguard to protect both the diver and others involved in diving operations.

Under Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, it is an offence to make, or possess, a document that closely resembles an official document and is intended to deceive.

Stuart Elmes pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 at Bristol Magistrates' Court on 17 April 2026. He was fined £700 and ordered to pay £2,620 in costs and a victim surcharge of £280.

## **HSE Diving Inspector Christopher Booker said:**

“Diving commercially is a high-risk activity. Being assessed as medically fit to work underwater, including when providing diver training, is an essential part of ensuring safety – not only for the individual but also for their students and colleagues.

“Stuart Elmes falsified an HSE diving medical certificate and used it to seek employment in the recreational diving industry.

“HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those found to be in possession of, or using, falsified fitness to dive certificates.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement advocates Rowena Goodwin and

Neenu Bains, supported by paralegal officer Michael Millman.

#### 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 can be found here:  
[Diving at Work Regulations 1997](#)  
[Commercial Diving Approved Codes of Practice](#)  
[Section 33 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
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](#).

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## [UK firms win national awards for innovative designs to reduce musculoskeletal risk for workers](#)

- A civil engineering firm and an air ambulance charity have won national awards for designs that eliminate the risk of musculoskeletal injuries at work.
- Robots and bespoke roller systems eliminate manual lifting risks.
- Winners mark the 10th year of the MSD Risk Reduction Through Design Awards
- Designs developed with workers could inspire other employers to follow suit.

Workers at two UK organisations will benefit from healthier working conditions after innovative design changes to cut musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) earned their employers this year's MSD Risk Reduction Through Design Awards – now in their tenth year.

The awards, sponsored by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF), recognise employers who have redesigned tasks to remove the risk of MSDs – injuries to

the back, joints and limbs that are among the most common causes of work-related ill health in Britain.

MP Coleman Ltd, a civil engineering and materials company, won the main award. Workers were manually palletising 25kg bags – each handling around 5 tonnes of material per shift – involving repetitive bending and twisting that caused lower back fatigue and shoulder discomfort. A robotic arm now picks, places and stacks the bags automatically, with an automatic wrapping unit replacing manual stretch wrapping entirely. Perimeter guarding (not shown in the photos) and automated controls improve safety and simplify the workflow.

No jobs were lost; workers were upskilled into other activities.



**BEFORE**

**AFTER**



Before: Workers manually palletised 25kg bags from conveyor. This involved constant bending and twisting motions. After: A robotic arm loads bags from conveyor to pallet, which is then wrapped automatically

Thames Valley Air Ambulance, the charity serving more than 2 million people across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, wins the Small to Medium Enterprise Recognition Award. Training manikins weighing between 20kg and 40kg had to be handled multiple times a day by two workers, with restricted space making ideal lifting postures difficult, increasing injury risk. Bespoke roller shelving and a height-adjustable roller trolley, designed with equipment manufacturers, health and safety specialists and workers, has substantially reduced MSD risk and made it a one-person task.



**BEFORE**

**AFTER**



Before: Manikins stored on fixed shelving in a restrictive area, compromising workers' posture when handling. After: Custom roller shelving installed with a height-adjustable roller trolley, eliminating the need to carry the 20kg-40kg manikins to the training area

**Chris Quarrie, HSE's Chartered Ergonomist, Human Factors Specialist and chair of this year's judging panel, said:**

“We congratulate both MP Coleman and Thames Valley Air Ambulance for reducing workplace MSD risks for their workers, hopefully their ideas can inspire others. This is the tenth year of the MSD risk reduction through design awards, and they demonstrate how design changes can eliminate or significantly reduce MSD risk – creating healthier workplaces.”

**Further information:**

1. For more information on the award winners visit: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/msd-awards.htm>
1. More information about Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF): <https://ergonomics.org.uk/>
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.
1. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>.