

Joinery firm fined for failing to protect its workers

- Unannounced visit by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found failures.
- The company had failed to protect workers from exposure to wood dust.
- They also failed to maintain electrical installations.

A joinery firm in Middlesbrough has been fined £10,000 after an unannounced visit by Britain's workplace regulator found multiple health and safety breaches.

Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) visited Abbey Joinery and Manufacture Limited at its Worlton Road site on 25 May 2023. During their inspection they identified multiple failings relating to the company's control of wood dust as well as its maintenance of electrical systems. These failings meant that employees were being unnecessarily exposed to unnecessary risks.



Inspectors found wood dust across the site

Breathing in wood dust excessively can cause asthma and nasal cancer. HSE provides a range of [guidance on working in the woodworking industry](#), covering the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002; exposure limits; extraction; and health surveillance.

HSE inspector Darian Dundas said: "Wood dust can cause serious health problems.

"It can cause [asthma](#), which carpenters and joiners are four times more likely to get compared with other UK workers.

"There is clear health and safety guidance available to assist businesses in adequately controlling exposure to wood dust.

"Adequate control of wood dust is achieved when the eight principles of good control practice are applied."

The HSE inspection also found failures in the company's electrical

installations, including both fixed and portable appliances and machinery. Exposed wiring carried the potential to put workers at risk of serious injury, or worse, from electric shock.



Electrical failings were also identified

HSE guidance about [electrical safety](#) is also available. Darian Dundas continued: “It is vital that maintenance is carried out done to ensure the safety of electrical systems.

“The inspection and testing of equipment is also an essential part of any preventive maintenance programme.

“This investigation was supported by specialist inspectors with a deep knowledge in electrical safety.

Abbey Joinery and Manufacture Limited, of Whorlton Road in Middlesbrough, pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £10,000 with £4,428 costs by Teesside Magistrates’ Court.

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward and paralegal officer Jason Dix.

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 in England and Wales can be found [here](#) and for those in Scotland [here](#).

5. Relevant HSE guidance referred to in this press release can be found here: [Control of substances hazardous to health \(Sixth edition\) – HSE](#), [EH40/2005 Workplace exposure limits](#) and [The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 – HSE](#).
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Rogue gas fitter jailed for carrying out unsafe work

- Antony Clifton was suspended by the Gas Safe Register – but carried out illegal and unsafe work anyway.
- People encouraged to check the [Gas Safe Register](#).

A rogue gas fitter from Norfolk has been jailed after carrying out unsafe gas work at a residential property while suspended from the Gas Safe Register.

Antony Clifton, from Wymondham, has been sentenced to 46 weeks in custody after he carried out unsafe gas work while falsely claiming to be a member of the Gas Safe Register. He worked at a home in Drayon, Norwich in January 2022, but there was a gas escape on the inlet to a cooker that had been fitted the day before by the 52-year-old.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Clifton had left the appliance in a condition where gas was leaking, and emergency repair work was required. Clifton had previously been served with a prohibition notice by HSE following unsafe gas work.

Further information and guidance on [domestic gas health and safety](#) is available.

Antony Clifton, a director of CS Appliance Repairs Limited, of Exige Way, Wymondham pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 3(7) and 5(3) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) 1998 Regulations. He was sentenced to a total of 46 weeks in custody and was ordered to pay £1,000 costs at a hearing at Great Yarmouth Magistrates' Court on 14 July 2025.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Martyn Webb said: "Antony Clifton knew that he was not registered and should not carry out any gas work.

"However, he showed a blatant disregard to this fact and his illegal actions meant the people living in that house could have been killed.

"Homeowners and tenants should check for Gas Safe registration before allowing work to commence on their appliances and refuse entry to individuals who cannot prove they are registered.

“All gas work must be done by a registered Gas Safe engineer to ensure the highest standards are met to prevent injury and loss of life.”

Gas engineers and consumers can contact the Gas Safe Register in any of these ways:

- [Gas Safe Register](#)
- Phone – **Consumers:** 0800 408 5500; **Engineers:** 0800 408 5577
- Email – enquiries@gassaferegister.co.uk

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Iain Jordan and paralegal officer Helen Hugo.

Further information:

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[Textile company fined after director killed by reversing HGV](#)

- Director’s family left with ‘mixed emotions’.
- No risk assessment or safe system of work in place at time.
- HSE guidance on safe use of transport is available

A textile manufacturer has been fined £220,000 after one of its directors was killed by a reversing HGV in Rochdale.

Daniel Ames was a director of The British Millerrain Company Limited and had offered to stay behind at the company warehouse to wait for the return of the vehicle on 22 June 2023.

The truck arrived at around 5.30pm. Mr Ames spoke to the driver and confirmed he would act as banksman to help the vehicle reverse into the warehouse.

During the manoeuvre, the driver lost sight of Mr Ames and when he got out to

check, he found him trapped between the vehicle and some steel storage racks in the warehouse. The driver called paramedics, but Mr Ames died in hospital from his injuries.



Daniel Ames was killed by a HGV at his workplace

Speaking after the company was fined, Mr Ames' family said the outcome left them with 'mixed emotions'.

"Daniel went to work and never came home again and we have a massive hole in our lives that will never be filled," they said in a statement.

"We are glad the company have admitted being responsible for his death and been handed a fine.

"But we remain devastated that we no longer have Daniel in our lives. Today we have still lost a much-loved dad, husband, uncle, son and brother, and we are devastated that his life ended in this way.

"He got on well with all his colleagues at work and had a great career. He was a respected professional who loved his job and was well known in the industry and was excited for his future. But that was taken away from us all in an instant.

"He was a real family man with a great sense of humour who was always making people smile and laugh and he enjoyed life to the full. We all miss him so much."

The incident was reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who carried out an investigation into what happened. That identified a number of failings exposing employees to various risks, including having no safe system in place for reversing HGVs. Employees confirmed they had been doing the task for several years but had never received any training. This included one employee who said he had on occasion reversed HGVs into the warehouse with someone else acting as banksman – despite neither being trained to do so.



The HGV was being reversed into the warehouse

The HSE investigation also found the company had no risk assessment in place in relation to this work, with the regulator serving it with an improvement notice. Following the incident the company carried out a risk assessment that resulted in a safe system of work being implemented, which meant vehicles were no longer reversed using a banksman. Relevant guidance can be found here: [Workplace transport – HSE](#).

The British Millerrain Company Limited, of Unit 1 Park Mill, Buckley Road, Rochdale, pleaded guilty to breaching section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £220,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,634 at Manchester Magistrates Court on 10 July 2025.

HSE inspector Jane Carroll said: “This is a tragic case.

“Daniel was clearly popular and respected, but his leadership and dedication to his colleagues was not properly protected by the defendant.

“A safe system of work was not in place.

“We will always take action against those who fail to protect people in work.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Gemma Zakrzewski and paralegal officer Stephen Grabe.

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Textile firm fined £300,000 after worker struck by vehicle

- CCTV stills show the scene moments before the incident.
- Company failed to properly manage vehicle movements on site.
- HSE guidance is available.

A company in the West Midlands that reclaims and processes textiles has been fined £300,000 after one of its workers was hit by a telehandler.

The man, now 42, suffered serious injuries to his legs in the incident that happened on 23 March 2023 at a factory belonging to JMP Wilcox & Company Limited at Beldtray Works in Bilston.



This CCTV still captured the moment leading up to the incident

Stills from CCTV footage captured the scene moments before the 39-year-old man was struck. He had been using a ride-on electric pallet truck inside the factory building. The pallet trucks are used for transporting goods of clothing to sorting lines and other areas around the factory.

The man and his supervisor had been finding stock in the 'goods-in' area. He was using his pallet truck to return an empty cage when he was hit by a telescopic handler that was being driven by another employee.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company failed to properly manage vehicle movements on site. This included organising the workplace in such a way as to ensure the safety of its employees, both pedestrians and those using vehicles.



In other CCTV stills, the poor working practices before the incident were captured

HSE provides guidance – [Workplace transport – HSE](#) – about what workplace transport arrangements can be put in place to prevent incidents. These include:

- The importance of risk assessment considering the risks associated with impact from other vehicles in the area such as telescopic handlers, forklift trucks and other trucks such as heavy goods vehicles (HGV) and what separation is required from those vehicles; and
- What separation would be required from other pedestrians and that these controls are implemented.

JMP Wilcox & Co Limited of Beldray Road, Bilston pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and have been fined £300,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,732 at Dudley Magistrates' Court on 20 June 2025.

HSE inspector Gail Bell said: "This incident highlights the dangers to safety from inadequate management of workplace transport.

"A man suffered very serious injuries due to the failure to put suitable control measures in place.

"These measures ensure people are kept safe at work and specifically prevent them being struck by a moving vehicle."

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall and paralegal officer Melissa Wardle.

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be found [here](#).

Teen's thumb re-attached after being severed off at work

- Apprentice injured in luxury hotel renovation
- HSE guidance on working with machinery is available

Doctors managed to successfully reattach the thumb of a teenage apprentice after it had been severed off by a rotating blade.

The then 18-year-old resumed his apprenticeship with another firm following the procedure.

He was employed as an apprentice joiner by 3B Construction when the incident happened during the conversion of a 19th century hunting lodge into a luxury hotel in the Highlands.

The company has been fined £40,000 at Tain Sheriff Court following an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and a prosecution brought by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).



Fig. 2. Dewalt DW745-LX Table Saw – shown in the condition that it was used in at the time of the incident - top guard and riving knife removed.

On 8 June 2021, the apprentice, who had been with the company for six months, was using a portable table saw to cut plasterboard during the project at Hope Lodge in Tongue.

He used his left hand to flick away material on the saw blade. His hand made contact with the rotating blade, cutting off his thumb. He raised the alarm with colleagues who took him to Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. His thumb was found a short time later and taken to the hospital.

After initial treatment the teenager was transferred to St John's Hospital In Livingston where he underwent surgery to successfully reattach his thumb.

He believes his thumb is working to around 70% of what it used to be, and it has healed as much as it can. It is shorter than his other thumb, he can't bend it fully and it is permanently swollen. In winter he suffers significant discomfort when the thumb becomes stiff and sore.

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 states employers must take effective measures to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery or to stop the movement of any dangerous parts of it before any part of a person enters a danger zone. HSE guidance is available [here](#).

The HSE investigation found that 3B Construction failed to

- undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to employees operating a table circular saw,
- ensure that the system of work for the operation of said saw was safe and appropriately supervised,
- provide your apprentice joiners with the information, instruction and training needed to operate said saw safely.

3B Construction Limited of Cassillis Business Park, Minishant Ayr pleaded guilty to Section 2(1) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £40,000 at Tain Sheriff Court on Tuesday 1 July 2025.

Norman Schouten said: "While this young man continues to live with the trauma and impact of this incident, it's greatly encouraging to see him continuing to work as a joiner.

"However, it is only the efforts of medical professionals that prevented this from becoming a permanent amputation following the failures of the company.

"Companies and individuals should be aware that HSE and COPFS will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

Notes to Editors

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