

Fine for construction company after father of three left paralysed

A father-of-three was left paralysed from the chest down after falling through a ceiling at a house renovation in Derbyshire.

Chesterfield builder Andrew Clifford remained lying face down on the floor for around six hours before he was found by a delivery driver. He judged the time by hearing hourly news bulletins from his radio.

Andrew had been working alone installing first-floor joists during the construction of a house on Main Road in Dronfield. The 51-year-old was carrying out the work on behalf of Paul Freeman Limited – a Mansfield-based company he had worked with for around 20 years.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has prosecuted the company for failing to properly plan work at height.

On the morning of 31 October 2022 Mr Clifford slipped and fell from the first floor to the ground below and was left unable to move.

He spent nearly five months in hospital, with the injuries to his spinal cord so serious they left him paralysed from the chest down, with only limited movement in his hands and arms.

Speaking about the day that changed his and his family's lives forever, Mr Clifford said: "The first thing I recall after my fall was landing on my head.

"From that point it was a very strange feeling as from when I landed, I felt no pain and I couldn't understand why or that I couldn't get up.

"My radio was on and I judged the time by the news. After an hour, I tried to move again and this carried on for around three hours. Eventually, I realised this was serious and I thought I'd better stay still as I didn't want to cause further injuries.

"This wasn't the type of street where people were walking past and as it started to get dark I was getting really worried.

"When I was found by the delivery driver I heard him shout out, 'hello, hello, hello'.

"I think I fell between 9am and 9.30 and wasn't found until 3pm."

He went on to say how being a builder was a job he loved and described the impact the incident has had on his everyday life.

"I can't do anything I used to love doing before," he said.

“Simple things like doing the gardening, washing the car and jobs around the house.

“I can’t even wash or dress myself now.

“I haven’t been upstairs in my house since the accident – my wife and three daughters all sleep upstairs and I sleep alone downstairs.

“Another thing that really upsets me is the thought of not being able to walk my daughters down the aisle when they get married.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Paul Freeman Limited failed to ensure that work at height had been properly planned and, as such, no measures had been implemented to prevent falls during the construction of the first floor. Mr Clifford had not been provided with suitable instruction as to how the work should be carried out and was therefore left to work this out on his own.

Working at height remains one of the leading causes of death in the construction industry and [HSE has detailed published guidance on minimising the risks associated with it](#).

Paul Freeman Ltd of Synergy House, Acorn Business Park, Commercial Gate, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 at Derby Magistrates’ Court on 4 November 2024. They were fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,263.

HSE inspector Sara Andrews said: “My thoughts remain with Andrew and his family, whose lives have changed dramatically as a result of this preventable incident.

“This case highlights the importance of undertaking a thorough assessment of the risks for all work at height activities and the need to ensure that, where work at height cannot be avoided, suitable control measures are implemented to minimise the risk of serious injury.

“This is even more significant when lone working.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains and paralegal officer Rebecca Forman.

Notes to editors:

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](#).

Stress Awareness Week: Employers have to fulfil legal duty

Britain's workplace health and safety regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), is calling on all employers during Stress Awareness Week 2024 to carry out their legal duty to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health at work.

HSE figures show the average employee suffering from work-related stress, depression or anxiety took an average of 19.6 days off work, almost the equivalent of a month's working days, with an estimated 875,000 cases in 2022/23.

HSE's Working Minds campaign provides employers with simple steps to prevent days lost due to work-related stress.

Kayleigh Roberts, Work-Related Stress and Mental Health Policy Lead at HSE, said: "Our statistics clearly outline that there is a work-related stress issue in Britain and we want this to change. A total of 17.1 million working days were lost in 2022/23, and this figure has a serious cost to the individual and to the business. Employers can make a difference by understanding and fulfilling their legal duty to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health at work.

"That is why we are reminding employers during Stress Awareness Week that it is critical they recognise the signs of work-related stress and get to the root causes behind this issue. Prevention is better than cure and understanding the risks is the first step to preventing them."

The legal duties for employers are:

- Carry out risk assessments for stress and act on them.
- Take steps to prevent work-related stress.
- Organisations with fewer than five employees don't have to write anything down (but it is useful to do this, for future review)
- Organisations with five or more employees, are required by law to write the risk assessment down.

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Factors like skills and experience, age, or disability may all affect someone's ability to cope.

HSE offers employers free risk assessment templates and free online training to help bosses keep their workforce healthy.

Kayleigh added: "Although tackling stress may appear daunting for some employers, failing to recognise the signs of work-related stress and acting on them can result in reduced productivity, sickness absence or even losing a valued member of staff. I would urge all employers who are looking for guidance to seek help through our Working Minds campaign, which helps companies follow five simple steps."

Working Minds calls on employers to follow the five Rs. They are to Reach out and have conversations, Recognise the signs and causes of stress, Respond to any risks you've identified, Reflect on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it Routine.

Andrew Berrie, Head of Corporate Partnerships at Mind, said: "We're delighted to continue to support HSE's Working Minds campaign. Mind has long been working with employers of different sizes and sectors to help them create mentally healthy workplaces, but as these insights show, this has never been more important.

"While many of us will face pressure in our working lives, unchecked and unmanageable pressures can lead to strain and can have a debilitating effect, resulting in stress. Stress can cause mental health problems, and make existing problems worse. For example, if you often struggle to manage feelings of stress, you might develop a mental health problem like anxiety or depression.

"It is vital that employers take steps to mitigate against work-related stress and create an environment in which employees can have open and honest conversations about triggers of stress and poor mental health. This can start with just a simple, person-centred conversation between managers and their teams."

Jenny Scott, Head of Communications at NEBOSH, said: "The statistics show a worrying picture of the mental ill health that people experience because of their work. But it doesn't have to be this way. We are delighted to continue our support for the Working Minds campaign, which provides great resources for employers who want to foster good mental health and prevent work-related stress. We will also welcome the HSE's Phoebe Smith to the NEBOSH Online Conference this November where she will guide delegates through the essential steps of creating a work-related stress risk assessment."

There are three main reasons employers should prevent work-related stress and support good mental health; it's the law, it's good for business and it's the right thing to do.

What can employers do during Stress Awareness Week?:

- [register for our free online learning](#)
- [download a risk assessment template](#)
- see the [Talking Toolkit](#) for help structuring your conversations

- [access resources](#) to share with others

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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. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click [here](#)
3. For press and media enquiries please contact media.enquiries@hse.gov.uk

School trust fined after pupil injured

A school trust in Surrey has been fined after part of a pupil's finger was amputated.

The five-year-old boy, a Year 1 pupil at Danetree Primary School in Epsom, had been leaving the toilet on 15 June 2022 when his right hand slipped and went into the hinge side of a door.

There was no door guard installed and he trapped his right hand in the door.

This led to the tip of his middle finger becoming detached as his right hand was stuck in the door.

A teacher found the tip of his middle finger, and the boy underwent surgery to re-attach his finger at St Georges Hospital in Tooting, London.

Although younger pupils in Key Stage 1 were taught in a newer building where hinge guards had been fitted on the doors, the incident occurred in a separate building where the older children in Key Stage 2 were taught.

The Key Stage 1 pupils would use the Key Stage 2 building at least once a week to use its library and learn about music and science. While in this building, the Key Stage 1 pupils were allowed to use the toilets unsupervised.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found GLF Schools, the trust that runs Danetree Primary School, had failed to identify the risk to its Key Stage 1 pupils while using the toilets. This meant hinge guards were not installed on the toilet doors of the building where Key Stage 2 pupils were taught.

GLF Schools, of Picquets Way, Banstead, Surrey, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The trust was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £6,875.70 in costs at Staines Magistrates' Court on 30 October 2024.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said: "This little boy and his family

could have been spared a lot of pain and upset if the trust had installed widely available, effective and inexpensive hinge guards on the doors the young children had access to. I would ask all schools to review their estates to make sure they have hinge guards where needed so no other children are hurt in this way when at school.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyers Jayne Wilson and Jon Mack and supported by HSE paralegal officer Melissa Wardle.

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.
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 made an application for a reporting restriction during this prosecution. This reporting restriction prohibits the publication of any information which may lead to the identification of the injured pupil.

Man spared immediate spell behind bars over unsafe gas work

A man from Blackpool has been spared an immediate spell behind bars after his unsafe gas work put people’s lives at risk.

Mehmet Kalyoncu, who pleaded guilty on the first day of a proposed trial, was given a 12-month custodial sentence suspended for the same period.

The 57-year-old, who was not Gas Safe Registered, installed various gas appliances and pipework at an address in the seaside town. It was only when concerns were raised about the work to the Gas Safe Register that investigators visited the property and found gas fittings had been left in an unsafe state.

When the matter was then referred to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for investigation, it became clear that Kalyoncu had previously been served with a prohibition notice to not undertake any further gas work unless he was Gas Safe registered.

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

As part of its investigation, HSE found that despite the earlier prohibition notice, Kalyoncu continued to carry out unregistered and unsafe gas work, putting members of the public at considerable risk from unsafe gas fittings and appliances.

Mehmet Kalyoncu, of no fixed abode, pleaded guilty to breaching section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and Regulations 3(3) and 6(2) of the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998. He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to pay costs of £600 at a trial at Preston Crown Court on 29 October 2024.

HSE principal inspector Caroline Shorrocks said: "Mehmet Kalyoncu showed a complete disregard to the safety of the public.

"He carried out unsafe gas work that put people at risk.

"The fact he had already been served with a notice to not do this unless Gas Safe registered makes this case even worse."

"All gas work must be done by registered Gas Safe Register engineers to ensure the highest standards are met to prevent injury and loss of life.

"The public should always ask to see the gas engineer's identification and check the registration number online."

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 prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Matthew Reynolds and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Withell.

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Company fined as employee fractures skull

A company has been fined £80,000 after an employee sustained a fractured skull at its site in Glasgow.

In addition to a fractured skull, the worker sustained a broken clavicle, a ripped earlobe and haematomas down his right side, caused by being struck by a telehandler bucket while working at Grayshill Limited on 19 October 2022.

He had been removing cattle from the back of a lorry when the telehandler bucket became detached and struck him.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found Grayshill Limited failed to implement a safe system of work for the use of quick hitches on the telehandler. A quick hitch is a latching device that enables, in this case, the bucket, to be connected to the arm of the telehandler and changed quickly. A manual quick hitch requires an operator to manually insert a metal pin from the latching device to secure the attachment.

On the morning of 19 October 2022, a self-employed agricultural engineer had serviced the telehandler, which included removing the bucket but the engineer did not correctly reattach it onto the telehandler after the service was complete. The investigation found that the securing pin for the quick hitch had not been reinserted.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\)](#)

HSE principal inspector Hazel Dobb said: "This was a serious incident that has resulted in a worker sustaining horrific injuries. We thoroughly investigated this incident and found Grayshill Limited failed to carry out the correct control measures and safe working practices at its site in Glasgow. The company also failed to check its vehicles after they had been serviced and repaired to ensure they were safe for use."

Grayshill Limited, of Mollins Road, Cumbernauld, Glasgow, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1), Section 2(2)(a) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £6,000 at Airdrie Sheriff Court on 28 October 2024.

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