

# Company fined after roofer fell through unguarded loft hatch

- Mark Smith fell through loft hatch while re-roofing house in Wimbledon.
- The roofer fractured his back and has been unable to return to work.
- Falls from height remain a leading cause of death and injury.

A Hampshire-based company has been fined after a roofer suffered life-changing injuries when he fell through an unprotected loft hatch while carrying out work on a domestic property in Wimbledon.

Mark Smith had been working for Willow Services (Southern) Limited on 13 May 2024, where he was re-roofing the house. The 41-year-old had been stripping out internal insulation within the roof space, when he stepped onto an unguarded loft hatch which had not been identified or protected.



The unguarded loft hatch

He fell approximately 11 feet to the floor below, landing on his back. He had fractured his L1 vertebra and his hip and has been unable to return to work since. His employment was later terminated by the company.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to suitably plan the work at height. The company did not ensure adequate measures were in place to prevent falls and had failed to provide competent supervision of the work.



The work had not been properly planned

The investigation also identified that those overseeing the work did not have the necessary training or experience to safely manage construction-related activities.

HSE guidance provides practical advice on planning, organising and carrying out roof work safely. It highlights the need to properly assess risks from working at height, identify fragile surfaces, provide suitable access equipment, and ensure falls are prevented wherever possible.

The guidance also stresses the importance of competence and supervision and applies to construction, maintenance, repair, cleaning and demolition activities. Following this guidance can help reduce the risk of fatal and serious injuries when working on roofs. [Work at height – HSE](#).



Falls from height are the leading cause of injury and death in construction

Willow Services (Southern) Ltd, of Westbrooke Close, Waterlooville, Hampshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £5,607 in

costs at Westminster Magistrates' Court on 30 April 2026.

**HSE Inspector Laurence Goodacre said:**

"Falls from height remain the leading cause of fatal incidents in the workplace, particularly within the construction industry.

"This incident was entirely avoidable and resulted from a failure to properly plan the work and provide competent supervision.

"Had the loft hatch been identified and protected at the planning stage, Mr Smith would not have suffered these life-changing injuries."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains and paralegal officer Atiya Khan

**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 – [Work at height – 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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## **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](#).