

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. Dewart 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

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 Scotland can be found [here](#).