

# 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](#).