

Waste and recycling company fined after worker injured cleaning machinery

- Supervisor turned machine on in devastating mix-up
- Employee suffered fractured shoulder, torn ligaments, and a broken finger
- HSE guidance highlights the importance of isolating machinery during cleaning

A North East waste and recycling company has been fined £270,000 after an employee was injured while cleaning a waste picking line.

On 24 March 2023, during cleaning of a waste picking line, an employee became trapped in a section of machinery when the line was accidentally switched on.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company failed to ensure an isolation procedure was correctly implemented while employees were cleaning machinery at its site at Aycliffe Quarry, Aycliffe Village, County Durham.



Machinery at the site at Aycliffe Quarry

The incident occurred when a senior supervisor, restarted the machinery after mistaking the worker in question for a colleague in similar clothing nearby.

The employee suffered a fractured shoulder, torn ligaments, and a broken finger.

This was not the first serious incident at the site. In December 2015, one worker was killed and another suffered life-changing injuries on a separate waste sorting line due to similar failures to follow proper isolation and lock-off procedures.



Waste sorting line machinery

HSE guidance highlights the importance of following safe isolation and lock-off procedures before any maintenance or cleaning work is carried out. Employers must ensure all machinery is properly isolated from power sources, and that systems are regularly monitored and reviewed to prevent inadvertent start-up. Further guidance is available here: [The safe isolation of plant and equipment – HSE](#)

Stonegrave Aggregates Limited, part of the Ashcourt Group, of Halifax Way, Pocklington, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £270,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £15,637 at Teesside Crown Court.

Following the hearing, HSE inspector Darian Dundas said:

“Effective monitoring, auditing and review of isolation systems is essential to demonstrate that they are working and controlling risk. Incidents like this can and should be prevented by following robust lock-off procedures.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE Enforcement Lawyer Karen Park, supported by Paralegal Officer Rebecca Foreman.

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. HSE guidance can be found here: [The safe isolation of plant and equipment – HSE](#)
3. Further details on the latest HSE news releases are available at press.hse.gov.uk.
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 can be found here.