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# Bernard Matthews Fined Â£400,000 Over Safety Breaches

## Description

Bernard Matthews Food Ltd has been fined Â£400,000 following two separate incidents where employees were seriously injured. Colin Frewin was left permanently paralysed and spent six months in hospital following an incident at the company's Suffolk manufacturing plant. Mr Frewin suffered multiple serious injuries, including a pierced left lung, several broken ribs, four fractured vertebrae, and a spinal bleed. He was put in an induced coma for three weeks and is now classed as a T6 paraplegic and has been diagnosed with autonomic dysreflexia (AD).

Chelmsford Crown Court heard how 54-year-old Mr Frewin suffered the injuries on 28 January 2020. He'd been tasked with cleaning a large screw conveyor used to move poultry turkeys along and chill them. While working on the gantry between the spin chillers, he noticed a turkey stuck at the bottom of it. As he attempted to dislodge the turkey using a squeegee, Mr Frewin was drawn into the machine. It was only when a colleague noticed Mr Frewin was missing from the gantry and heard his cries for help that the emergency stop was pulled.

The HSE investigation found an unsafe system of work meant the chillers remained running as Mr Frewin went to dislodge the turkey. In a victim personal statement, Mr Frewin described how his horrific injuries left him feeling 'isolated' and in need of daily care.

Another incident occurred where a worker suffered a severe arm injury after being pulled into a conveyor belt machine.

## Further Investigation

The investigation uncovered that two safety guards had been removed and a team leader responsible for the production lines had verbally reported this issue to the engineering team, but it was not followed up by either party. Bernard Matthews Food Ltd of Sparrowhawk Road, Halesworth in Suffolk pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined Â£400,000 and ordered to pay costs of Â£15,000.

After the sentencing, HSE Principal Inspector Adam Hills said: 'Both incidents could have been avoided' the consequences were devastating for Mr Frewin in particular.

'If Bernard Matthews had acted to identify and manage the risks involved and put a safe system of work in place they could have easily been prevented. Fundamentally, you should not clean a machine while it is running.

'Companies need to ensure that risk assessments cover activities including cleaning and blockages, and that where appropriate, robust isolation and lock-off mechanisms are in place for these activities. Prior to use, you can put in place some pre-start checks and if faults such as missing guards are identified, they need to be formally reported, tracked, rectified, and closed out.'

## CATEGORY

1. Suffolk

## POST TAG

1. Adam Hills (HSE)
2. Bernard Matthews Food
3. Colin Frewin
4. Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

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## Tags

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