
Centriforce Fined Â£200,000 after Safety Prosecution over Bale Crush Fatality

Description

On May 24, 2017, tragedy struck at Centriforce Products Limited's site on Derby Road in Liverpool. The day began like any other at the recycling plant, where large bales of waste plastic were delivered and stacked in the yard. These bales, each weighing over 50 kilograms, were arranged in free-standing columns, a common sight at the facility. However, what started as a routine day ended in disaster when one of these stacks collapsed, leading to the untimely death of an employee, Paul Andrews.

That morning, a forklift truck (FLT) driver noticed something amiss. One of the columns, stacked three bales high, had partially collapsed, obstructing his path. Without much thought, he decided to use his forklift to straighten and stabilize the stack before continuing with his duties. Hours later, Paul Andrews found himself working in the vicinity of the same stack. Suddenly, without warning, the unstable bales toppled over. The middle and top bales came crashing down, trapping Paul beneath their crushing weight. The scene was not discovered until nearly an hour later, by which time all efforts to revive him had tragically failed.

The subsequent investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed glaring failures on the part of Centriforce Products Limited. The company had not taken the necessary steps to ensure the safe storage of these heavy plastic bales. They had failed to secure the bales in a manner that would prevent such a collapse, putting their workers in grave danger. Furthermore, they had neglected to conduct a thorough risk assessment, which would have highlighted the potential hazards to employees working near unstable stacks. This lack of due diligence directly contributed to the preventable death of Paul Andrews.

The legal repercussions for Centriforce Products Limited were significant. The company, based at Errington Works on Derby Road in Bootle, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. For their negligence, they were fined Â£120,000 and ordered to pay additional costs amounting to Â£10,540.95. However, no amount of money could undo the loss suffered by Paul's family.

Paul Andrews was a devoted husband to his wife, Claire, and a loving father to his two daughters. Their lives were irreversibly altered by this senseless accident. Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Rohan Lye expressed the deep regret and frustration that this tragedy could have been avoided. "This appalling incident could so easily have been prevented if Paul's employer had acted to identify and manage the risks involved, and put a safe system of work in place," he stated. "Their failure to do so has left Claire without her husband and two daughters without their father."

The death of Paul Andrews serves as a somber reminder to all employers about the critical importance of workplace safety. In industries like recycling, where workers are frequently in close proximity to heavy machinery and materials, the risks are even more pronounced. The responsibility to identify these risks and implement effective control measures lies squarely with the employer. It is not enough to assume that workers will navigate these dangers on their own. Without proper guidance, training,

and safety protocols, the risk of accidents remains unacceptably high.

Centriforce Products Limited's failure to conduct a suitable risk assessment was a glaring oversight. Risk assessments are not merely bureaucratic formalities; they are vital tools that can prevent injury and save lives. A thorough assessment would have highlighted the dangers of unstable stacks and prompted the company to take corrective action. Simple measures, such as securing the bales with straps or nets, could have significantly reduced the risk of a collapse. Additionally, implementing stricter guidelines for the stacking and handling of these heavy bales would have provided an extra layer of protection for the workers.

In the wake of such a tragedy, it is crucial for other companies in the industry to learn from this incident. The safety of workers must always be the top priority, and this requires a proactive approach to hazard identification and risk management. Employers should regularly review their safety procedures, conduct comprehensive risk assessments, and ensure that all employees are adequately trained in safe working practices. By fostering a culture of safety, companies can help prevent accidents and protect their most valuable asset—their workers.

For Paul Andrews's family, the pain of his loss will never fully heal. His death was a result of negligence, and it underscores the devastating consequences that can arise when safety is compromised. While the fine imposed on Centriforce Products Limited may bring a measure of accountability, it does little to alleviate the suffering of those left behind.

The tragic death of Paul Andrews should serve as a wake-up call to all employers. The lessons learned from this incident must not be ignored. Proper safety measures are not optional; they are a moral and legal obligation. By prioritizing the health and safety of workers, companies can prevent future tragedies and ensure that no family has to endure the heartache that Paul's family has experienced. The responsibility is clear: act now to protect lives and create a safer workplace for everyone.

CATEGORY

1. Merseyside

POST TAG

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