
Major Pizza Maker Fined Â£500,000 for Health and Safety Breaches

Description

On March 15, 2024, Stateside Foods Ltd, one of the UK's largest producers of supermarket pizzas, was fined Â£500,000 for breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The fine was imposed following two serious incidents at their Bolton factory, which resulted in severe injuries to employees. This article delves into the details of the case, the parties involved, and the implications of the court's decision.

Background

Stateside Foods Ltd, based in Westhoughton, Bolton, supplies millions of pizzas to major UK supermarkets. Despite its success, the company faced scrutiny after two separate incidents in 2020 highlighted significant safety failings.

The Incidents

1. First Incident: January 8, 2020

- **Victim:** An unnamed male employee
- **Details:** The employee's arm was drawn into an inadequately guarded conveyor belt at the Lancaster Way factory. The injury required the removal of muscle and a skin graft. The victim has not returned to work since and suffers from hypersensitivity in the affected arm.

2. Second Incident: October 14, 2020

- **Victim:** Andrew Holloway, a father of two and acting team leader
- **Details:** Holloway's hand was drawn between a roller and a conveyor belt while investigating an issue on the production line. His middle finger was partially severed, and despite multiple surgeries, he continues to suffer from pain and limited mobility. Holloway's injury has had a profound impact on his personal and professional life.

Investigation and Findings

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) conducted an investigation into the incidents and found several critical failings:

- **Inadequate Guarding:** Machinery was not adequately guarded, exposing workers to dangerous parts.
- **Insufficient Checks:** The company failed to provide suitable and sufficient checks to ensure protective measures were effective.
- **Disabled Safety Systems:** There were instances where guarding systems were disabled, allowing access to hazardous machinery.

Court Proceedings

The case was heard at Bolton Crown Court, where Stateside Foods Ltd was found guilty of breaching

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The court imposed a fine of Â£500,000, reflecting the severity of the company's failings and the impact on the victims.

Impact on Victims

- **Unnamed Male Employee:** Continues to suffer from hypersensitivity and has not returned to work.
- **Andrew Holloway:** Struggles with daily pain and limited hand function, affecting his ability to care for his young son and pursue hobbies like art.

Conclusion

The fine imposed on Stateside Foods Ltd serves as a stark reminder of the importance of workplace safety. Companies must ensure that machinery is adequately guarded and that safety systems are rigorously maintained to protect employees from harm. The case highlights the devastating impact that safety failings can have on individuals and their families, underscoring the need for stringent adherence to health and safety regulations.

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