
McCain Foods Fined Â£700,000 for Health and Safety Breach

Description

On November 22, 2023, McCain Foods (G.B.) Limited was fined Â£700,000 after pleading guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The case, heard at Lincoln Magistrates' Court, revolved around a serious incident that resulted in an employee losing two fingers. This article delves into the details of the case, the parties involved, and the implications of the court's decision.

Incident Details

The Accident

- **Date:** September 2, 2019
- **Location:** McCain Foods' site in Easton, Lincolnshire
- **Victim:** Tom Matthews, a 33-year-old employee from Grantham

Tom Matthews was working a night shift when he suffered severe injuries to his left hand while cleaning the company's batter system machinery. [Attempting to remove string from a chute, his hand was drawn into the machine's rotary valve, resulting in the amputation of his index and middle fingers¹.](#)

Aftermath

Tom Matthews, a father of two, has faced ongoing physical and mental challenges since the incident. [He now works in a health and safety role at a different company, using his experience to advocate for better workplace safety¹.](#)

Investigation and Findings

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Investigation

The HSE investigation revealed several critical failures by McCain Foods:

- **Inadequate Guarding:** [The company failed to provide appropriate guarding to prevent access to dangerous parts of the machinery, specifically the rotary valve¹.](#)
- **Risk Assessment:** [There was no adequate risk assessment conducted for the batter machine².](#)
- **Training and Supervision:** [Employees were not provided with sufficient health and safety training or supervision².](#)

Legal Proceedings

- **Charges:** McCain Foods pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Section 11 (1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)¹.
- **Fine:** The company was fined Â£700,000 and ordered to pay Â£6,508.51 in costs¹.

Statements and Reactions

Victim's Statement

Tom Matthews expressed his ongoing struggles and his commitment to preventing similar incidents in the future. [He emphasized the importance of proper safety measures and training in the workplace¹.](#)

HSE's Statement

HSE inspector Muir Finlay highlighted that the incident could have been easily avoided with simple safety measures. [He reiterated HSE's commitment to taking enforcement action against those who fail to meet required safety standards¹.](#)

McCain Foods' Response

A spokesperson for McCain Foods stated that the company takes the health and safety of its staff extremely seriously. [They have since enhanced their machinery safety measures and reported zero employee safety incidents across their six UK sites over the past 12 months².](#)

Conclusion

The case of McCain Foods serves as a stark reminder of the importance of workplace safety and the severe consequences of neglecting it. The substantial fine underscores the legal and moral obligations companies have to protect their employees. Tom Matthews' story is a powerful testament to the ongoing impact of workplace accidents and the critical need for rigorous safety protocols.

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