
Princess Yachts Fined Â£600,000 for Health and Safety Breach

Description

Princess Yachts Limited, a renowned luxury yacht manufacturer based in Plymouth, faced a significant legal setback on November 30, 2023. The company was fined Â£600,000 after being found guilty of breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 2(1). This verdict came in the wake of a catastrophic accident that left one of its long-serving employees, Mark Gillen, with life-changing injuries.

Incident Overview

- **Date of Incident:** November 9, 2021
- **Location:** Southyard site, Princess Yachts Limited, Plymouth
- **Victim:** Mark Gillen, 54 years old, employee for 26 years

Details of the Accident

Mark Gillen was part of a team working on a 72-foot vessel at the company's Southyard site. The team was moving a staging platform, weighing approximately one tonne, when one of the front wheels hit a divot in the concrete surface. This caused the platform to topple over, crushing Mark beneath it. The severity of his injuries included:

- 12 broken ribs
- Severed right arm
- Bleeds on the brain
- Chronic nerve pain

Mark was airlifted to the hospital and remained in intensive care for several months. His recovery has been arduous, with ongoing chronic pain and a significant impact on his quality of life.

Legal Proceedings

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) conducted a thorough investigation, revealing that the manual movement of the staging platform should have been prohibited. The investigation highlighted several key points:

- Lack of risk assessment for moving the staging platform
- Inadequate safety measures in place
- Previous incidents indicating a pattern of safety oversights

During the court proceedings at Plymouth Magistrates' Court, HSE enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall emphasized the company's failure to ensure a safe working environment. District Judge Jo Matson, acknowledging the company's financial struggles, imposed a fine of Â£600,000 and ordered Princess Yachts to pay additional costs of Â£9,146.

Statements from Involved Parties

- **Sarah Gillen:** Mark's wife expressed the profound impact of the accident on their lives. "Our worlds were turned upside down the day Mark had the catastrophic crush accident. We are incredibly lucky to still have him with us, but the road to recovery has been extremely difficult and challenging."
- **HSE Inspector Paul Mannell:** "The company should have had measures in place to ensure that mobile staging was never pushed through the yard by hand. Mr. Gillen is lucky to be alive."

Company's Response

Princess Yachts Limited admitted to breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company has since taken steps to address the safety concerns raised by the HSE investigation. These measures include:

- Implementing stricter safety protocols
- Conducting comprehensive risk assessments
- Enhancing employee training programs

Conclusion

The case of Princess Yachts Limited serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of workplace safety. The substantial fine underscores the legal and moral obligations companies have to protect their employees. While no financial penalty can undo the harm suffered by Mark Gillen and his family, it is hoped that this case will prompt other organizations to prioritize health and safety in their operations.

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Date

20/09/2024

Date Created

02/12/2023