
Recycling Firm's £2M Fine: A Tragic Tale of Negligence

Description

On 15th February 2024, Ward Recycling Limited, a recycling company, was fined a hefty £2.15 million following a tragic incident at its Hartlepool site. The company was found guilty of corporate manslaughter and breaching health and safety regulations after an agency worker, Dean Atkinson, was fatally struck by a loading shovel.

The incident occurred in January 2020 at the company's premises on Windermere Road, Longhill Industrial Estate. Mr Atkinson, aged 32, was returning to his workstation on the picking line from the site's welfare cabins. His route required him to cross a traffic area where mobile plant machinery, including two loading shovels, was in operation. Tragically, Mr Atkinson was struck and killed by one of the loading shovels while walking in this area.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector, Stephen Garner, stated that Mr Atkinson's death could have been prevented if the company had implemented an alternative traffic route for pedestrians at its site. The HSE guidelines on workplace transport clearly outline the need for suitable separation between pedestrians and vehicles.

Following Mr Atkinson's death, investigations were launched by both the HSE and Cleveland Police. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) subsequently prosecuted Ward Recycling. The company, which went into liquidation in 2021, was found guilty of failing to protect pedestrians from the mobile plant operations at its site. The HSE investigation revealed that there were no suitable traffic management arrangements in place, putting pedestrians at risk of being struck by moving vehicles, including loading shovels.

Loading shovels pose a particular risk if adequate segregation is not in place, partly due to the operator's limited visibility around the machine. A HSE visibility assessment found that an area over 10 metres in front of the vehicle could be obscured from the driver's view.

Ward Recycling Limited, formerly based at St Peter's Square, Oxford Street, Manchester, was found guilty of breaching Section 1 of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, and Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £1.75 million for corporate manslaughter and an additional £400,000 for breaching health and safety regulations at Middlesbrough Crown Court on 26th January 2024.

Inspector Garner commented, "This tragic incident could easily have been avoided if Ward Recycling had implemented simple control measures. Following the incident, it took the company less than a week to put in place an alternative traffic route to protect pedestrians. Had this been in place before the incident, Dean Atkinson would not have lost his life. Sadly, pedestrians being struck by vehicles on waste sites has caused many fatal accidents on waste sites and the industry should be well aware of the risks."

CATEGORY

1. County Durham

POST TAG

1. Dean Atkinson
2. Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
3. Stephen Garner (HSE)
4. Struck-By Accident
5. Ward Recycling

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