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# Safety Breach Leads to Labourer's Fractured Skull and Major Fines for Companies

## Description

In a significant legal outcome, two companies have been penalized a total of £46,000 following a serious incident that left a labourer with a fractured skull. This unfortunate event unfolded on March 3, 2021, at a construction site in Runcorn, where a 43-year-old worker employed by Total Brickwork (UK) Ltd was engaged in building new homes on Okell Street. The site was under the management of Challenger Building Services Ltd, and both firms faced consequences for their roles in this incident.

The labourer was tasked with clearing debris and mortar that had been left behind by bricklayers on the first floor of one of the new terraced properties. To reach this area, he utilized a ladder positioned at the stairwell opening, which had been temporarily covered with boards. As he attempted to move one of these boards, he lost his footing and tragically fell through the opening, plummeting to the ground floor below.

The fall resulted in severe injuries, including a fractured skull, multiple broken ribs, and the necessity for a collarbone plate insertion. This incident prompted an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which uncovered significant safety deficiencies at the construction site.

The HSE's investigation revealed that both Challenger Building Services Limited, the principal contractor, and Total Brickwork (UK) Ltd, the contractor responsible for the work, had failed to adequately plan, manage, and monitor the on-site activities to ensure that safety measures were in place. The absence of appropriate safeguards to prevent falls from height put any worker accessing the first floor at considerable risk.

Challenger Building Services Ltd, based in Horwich, Bolton, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulation 2015. The company was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £1,991.32 in costs at Warrington Magistrates' Court on October 23, 2023. Meanwhile, Total Brickwork UK Ltd, located in Runcorn, Cheshire, also pleaded guilty, this time to breaching Regulation 15(2) of the same regulation. The company received a fine of £16,000 and was required to pay £1,991.32 in costs, with the sentence handed down on the same date.

HSE inspector David Brassington commented on the incident, emphasizing that it could have been easily avoided had the risks associated with working on upper floors been adequately assessed. He stated, "This incident could so easily have been avoided had the risks associated with working on the upper floors been adequately assessed and measures been taken to protect the stairwell openings. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

This case serves as a stark reminder of the importance of safety in the construction industry. It highlights the critical need for companies to prioritize the well-being of their workers by implementing effective safety measures and ensuring compliance with regulations. The consequences of neglecting these responsibilities can be severe, not only for the individuals directly affected but also for the

companies involved.

In conclusion, the penalties imposed on Challenger Building Services Ltd and Total Brickwork (UK) Ltd reflect the serious nature of the safety breaches that occurred. The incident underscores the necessity for rigorous safety protocols in construction environments. As the industry continues to evolve, it is imperative that all stakeholders remain vigilant and proactive in safeguarding the health and safety of workers on-site.

## **CATEGORY**

1. Cheshire

## **POST TAG**

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2. Ladder Safety
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