
VB Farms LLP Fined Â£60,000 for Fatal Electrocution Incident

Description

On August 16, 2023, VB Farms LLP was found guilty and fined Â£60,000 for breaching the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. The case, which was heard at Exeter Magistrates' Court, revolved around the tragic death of Patrick 'Paddy' Rice, who was electrocuted while working at Littlecombe Farm in Crediton, Devon.

Incident Details

- **Date of Incident:** May 13, 2021
- **Victim:** Patrick 'Paddy' Rice, a 43-year-old father of three from Crediton
- **Employer:** Langford Plant Hire
- **Location:** Littlecombe Farm, Crediton, Devon
- **Cause:** Paddy Rice was delivering stone to VB Farms LLP when the hydraulic arm of his tipper lorry came into contact with an 11kV overhead power line. He was electrocuted upon exiting the lorry.

Investigation Findings

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

- **Risk Assessment:** VB Farms LLP failed to carry out a proper risk assessment to ensure the work could be completed safely.
- **Safety Measures:** [The company did not consider the dangers associated with working near overhead power lines, which typically carry high voltages, up to 400 kV in some cases¹.](#)

Court Proceedings

- **Charges:** VB Farms LLP was charged with breaching Regulations 3 (1) and 4 (3) of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.
- **Verdict:** Guilty
- **Sentence:** [Fined Â£60,000 and ordered to pay costs of Â£11,715 on August 17, 2023¹.](#)

Statements from the Family

- **Fran Rice (Mother):** 'Paddy was an extremely practical person. He had loads of friends and was very popular and liked adventures. Since the loss of Paddy, we are all traumatised and deeply shocked. It has all been hazy. We find it difficult to talk about what happened.'
- **Michele Webber (Partner):** 'When the accident happened, I was off work for about five months. My memory is terrible since it happened and I am stuck on the day of the accident. I feel like I have no purpose or joy and no future.'

HSE's Response

HSE inspector James Collins commented on the case: “This was a tragic and wholly avoidable incident – another sad reminder of the dangers of overhead powerlines. [Paddy’s death could easily have been prevented if VB Farms LLP had acted to manage the risks involved and put in place a safe system of work](#)”.

Conclusion

The case of VB Farms LLP serves as a stark reminder of the importance of adhering to safety regulations, especially when working near high-voltage power lines. The tragic loss of Patrick “Paddy” Rice highlights the need for rigorous risk assessments and safety measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

CATEGORY

1. Devon

POST TAG

1. Agriculture Sector
2. VB Farms

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Date

20/09/2024

Date Created

18/08/2023