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# Wilko Fined Â£2.2 Million After Horrific Workplace Accident

## Description

Household goods giant Wilko has been fined Â£2.2 million after a tragic incident at a Leicester store left a young worker paralyzed. Corisande Collins, a 20-year-old student working part-time at the Wilko store in Beaumont Shopping Centre, suffered severe spinal injuries when a cage full of paint tins fell on her in August 2013.

## The Accident

Attempting to manoeuvre the heavy, metal cage out of an uneven lift floor, Ms. Collins experienced a life-altering accident. "Wilko is taking full responsibility for what happened, but this will never make up for the fact I have lost the use of my legs and will spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair," she said.

Ms. Collins, from Glenfield, was a first-year student at Northampton University pursuing a degree in Special Educational Needs at the time.

## Medical and Rehabilitation Journey

Following the incident, she spent weeks at Coventry's Walsgrave Hospital before being transferred to the spinal injuries unit in Sheffield for extensive rehabilitation. She was eventually discharged in December 2013 and, 18 months after her injury, returned part-time to her university course. Her injuries necessitate the use of a wheelchair for mobility.

## Health and Safety Breaches

Wilko Retail Ltd admitted to four breaches of health and safety legislation. The court heard about the multiple failings at the Leicester store:

- The main goods lift and passenger lift floors were not level with the shop floor.
- The roll cage that fell on Ms. Collins was improperly loaded.
- Employees lacked adequate training or supervision on the safe use of roll cages and the lifts involved in the accident.
- Suitable risk assessments were not conducted, and the general risk assessment for roll cages did not address the hazards of manoeuvring them on uneven surfaces.
- No assessments were made for the manual handling of roll cages, nor were employees provided information on safely distributing loads within the roll cage.

## Court Proceedings and Sentencing

Leicester City Council's Public Safety Team brought the prosecution against Wilko Retail Ltd. The

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company appeared before Leicester Crown Court after previously pleading guilty to four offenses. Based in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, Wilko operates nearly 400 stores across the UK, including four in Leicester, with a turnover of £1.4 billion.

Passing sentence, His Honour Judge Ebrahim Mooncey imposed a £2.2 million fine for the first of the four Health and Safety offenses—failing to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of employees—without imposing a separate penalty for the other three related offenses. The company was also ordered to pay £70,835 in costs.

## Reflections from the Victim

Reflecting on her ordeal, Ms. Collins, now 23, said, “I never imagined something like this happening to me. Wilko is taking full responsibility for what happened, but this will never make up for the fact I have lost the use of my legs and will spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair. We are pleased with the prosecution brought by Leicester City Council—it is now up to employers to learn the lessons.”

## Official Statements

Leicester Assistant City Mayor for jobs and skills, Cllr Sue Waddington, emphasized the importance of workplace safety. “Businesses need to take responsibility for the health and safety of employees,” she stated. “The large fine was deserved because this young woman’s life was put at risk, but it will not make up for the life-changing injuries that she suffered, which could have been avoided if proper health and safety measures were in place.”

Govind Mandora, Leicester City Council Public Safety Team Manager, added, “Our team brought this prosecution against Wilko after finding catastrophic health and safety failings at the Beaumont Leys store, which resulted in this devastating accident. The fine imposed today reflects the serious nature of this case. All businesses need to take heed and learn from this tragic case by taking their health and safety responsibilities seriously. Simple steps like carrying out adequate risk assessments, proper training and supervision for staff, and properly maintained equipment will help prevent similar accidents from happening again.”

## Conclusion

The impact of this tragic accident serves as a stark reminder of the critical importance of rigorous health and safety measures in the workplace. For Ms. Collins, the consequences are lifelong. For businesses, this case underscores the vital need for vigilance and responsibility to protect their employees.

### CATEGORY

1. Leicestershire

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1. Accident
2. Hazards

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  4. Health and Safety
  5. Impact
  6. Incident
  7. Injuries
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  11. Retail Sector
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