
Workers Injured After Health & Safety Breaches

Description

A recent case report from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reveals that a bedding manufacturer has been fined over £250,000 after two employees were seriously injured in separate incidents at its Rochdale site. Sartex Quilts and Textiles Limited faced prosecution following these incidents, which resulted in both workers undergoing amputations.

HSE inspector Elena Pickford described the injuries as “serious and avoidable.”

The first incident occurred on 29 March 2020. A 32-year-old employee from Burnley, on his first day working on the line, was instructed to clean the measuring wheel on a cutting machine. He climbed onto the conveyor belt, but the cutting machine had not been properly isolated from all power sources. The machine’s clamp came down, trapping the employee’s left hand and causing the circular saw to move. Another employee stopped the saw by pressing the emergency stop button, but it was too late. The worker lost three fingers from his left hand.

On 22 October 2021, a second employee, aged 51 from Rochdale, was operating a quilting machine. He noticed a fallen casing and attempted to place it onto the back of the machine while it was running. His gloves became tangled in the machine, dragging his right hand in. This caused lacerations and crush injuries, resulting in the amputation of the tips of two fingers.

HSE inspectors Leanne Ratcliffe and Elena Pickford investigated the incidents and found that Sartex Quilts and Textiles Limited had failed to guard the machinery and implement adequate procedures to isolate machinery from power.

HSE guidance states that machines should be properly switched off, isolated, or locked off before removing blockages, cleaning, or making adjustments. Machines should also be fitted with fixed guards to enclose dangerous parts whenever practical. The full guidance can be found on the HSE website.

Sartex Quilts and Textiles Limited, based at Castle Mill, Queensway, Rochdale, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Regulation 11 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined £251,250 and ordered to pay £6,862.63 in costs at Manchester & Salford Magistrates’ Court on 14 February 2024.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Elena Pickford stated: “These injuries were serious and avoidable. The risk should have been identified. Employers should ensure that access to dangerous parts of machinery is prevented. Had these machines been adequately guarded and a safe isolating procedure been in place, these incidents could have been prevented.”

CATEGORY

1. Greater Manchester

POST TAG

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2. Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
3. Leanne Ratcliffe (HSE)
4. Machinery Safety
5. Sartex Quilts and Textiles

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