

Telehandler rear vision costs £65,000

John Graham (Dromore) Ltd was fined £65,000 after pleading guilty to breaching health & safety legislation at Belfast Crown Court last month. The Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland prosecuted the company, following the death of Gerard Morgan, a 53-year-old labourer, who died after a telehandler reversed over him at the Ormeau Bakery site on February 27th, 2008.

An investigation found that the company did not ensure that the telehandler driver had an adequate vision to the rear of the machine. Prosecutor David McConaghy said the company had recognised that there were problems with the telehandler and had fitted a 'fish-eye' mirror in addition to the two reversing mirrors. However,

it had been damaged and not replaced and while the reverse alarms were working properly, the driver's visibility was also hampered by a faulty window-wash system. The operator was not even aware that he had run over Morgan until he was heading back down the track with another skip of concrete.

Defence QC Gerald Simpson said: The company had apologised for the tragic and unnecessary death of Morgan, although I realise it would not make a jot of difference to his family. Graham's have learned much and a number of new procedures aimed at preventing such accidents in the future have been put into operation."

Even the more modern telehandlers have some blind spots, but normal mirrors can largely overcome them.

Louis Burns of the HSENI said: "Companies need to ensure that operators of mobile equipment should be able to see anyone who is put at risk when any control is operated, including driving in reverse."

Fatal accident costs £106,000

UK ship repair yard, A&P Falmouth has been hit with £106,500 in fines and costs following a fatal crane accident in August 2006, in which painter John Datson, 51, was crushed between a crane and an aerial lift which was being hoisted aboard the Royal Navy auxiliary Mounts Bay.

Datson was helping guide the platform as it was lifted onto the ship, however, it hung up on the crane's chassis, causing Datson and a colleague to move in to try and free it. They succeeded but the lift, swung away from the crane and then back, crushing Datson against the crane's chassis. He died immediately from his injuries.

Truro Crown Court, handed down an £85,000 fine plus £21,508 in costs. The company had admitted failing to introduce a safe system of work, especially with regard to the provision of sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision for employees using lifting equipment.

Recorder Donald Tait said: "I make it clear that no blame whatsoever can be attached to Mr Datson. But he should not have been where he was. There was no one person present in overall command and, in what I view as a spirit of co-operation, those present mucked in to get the job done. It was a routine lift and the last of a number of successful lifts done that day. I accept this company does not and never has taken a cavalier attitude to health and safety - if it did the penalty would be significantly higher."

Datson had not been formally trained in lifting, but was not inexperienced, having been involved in such operations around 300 times a year.

Counsel David Morgan, for the company, stressed its health and safety ethos and said it was the first yard in Europe to hold three major qualifications relating to health and safety and environmental health management systems at the same time.

Tower death costs EDF £185,000

EDF Energy Contracting Ltd has been fined £160,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £24,594.98 after pleading guilty to breaching the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The case was brought following the death of one of its employees, James Gordon, 63, after he fell almost five metres to his death while dismantling an alloy access tower at Worthing High School in West Sussex on August 2nd 2007.

Gordon was dismantling the tower in the sports hall of the school and having removed the top platform was working from the intermediate platform when he appears to have stumbled and fell to his death. There were no guardrails in place. HSE Inspector Russell Beckett said: "It is important that all tower scaffolds are



The recommended 3T method of dismantling a tower.

erected and dismantled correctly and that guard rails are fitted to prevent falls. All too often tower scaffolds are used incorrectly without the correct handrails. All working platforms must be provided with suitable edge protection and an intermediate guard rail should be provided so that workers can't fall through any unprotected gaps".

PASMA has issued a statement on this accident (see PASMA focus page 63)

A lucky escape

A man installing Christmas lights had a miraculous escape earlier this month after falling around four metres from a van mounted aerial lift in Worthing England. The lift had been set up on the pavement but the basket clearly protruded into the bus lane. A double decker clipped the platform causing the levelling rods to bend or break tipping the insulated bucket dumping the occupant who does not appear to have been wearing a harness or lanyard. The man was taken my ambulance to Worthing Hospital but appears to have escaped without serious injury.



Clearly the set up for this job was well below par, and could so easily have resulted in a fatality.

Who trained him then?

This man is very calmly using his step ladder to the maximum and has almost certainly never attended a Ladder Association training course.



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