

# Slow learning costs £150,000

An HSE inspector has criticised Rubb Buildings Ltd for not learning the lessons from a fatal accident involving one of its employees. Rubb was contracted to dismantle a temporary airport hangar at Bristol Airport on 16th December 2006. Steven Watson and a colleague were using a boom lift to remove the hangar's PVC tarpaulin roof. Watson was given permission by his supervisor to step on to the roof to cut a hole in the tarpaulin. He was not wearing a harness and as he started to climb back into the platform he fell 10 metres through the hole he had cut in the roof to the concrete floor below. He died at the scene from internal injuries.

The HSE issued a Prohibition Notice for failing to implement a safe system of work, and to stop workers gaining direct access to the roof of the hangar. Inspectors stressed that Watson should not have been allowed to access the roof at any time. He should have been instructed to cut the tarpaulin from the underside of the roof, from the safety of the lift's platform.

In January 2007, the company was contracted to erect a temporary hangar at Sellafield Nuclear power plant. However it was prevented

from starting the job after the site's principal contractor, the Kier Group determined that the method of work and equipment were unsuitable. HSE inspector Steve Frain said: "The principal contractor at Sellafield had no knowledge about the Bristol fatality. It does not appear to me that Rubb Buildings had been proactive in learning the lessons from this tragic accident, despite receiving a letter from the HSE about its failings during the incident and being issued with a Prohibition Notice."

Rubb came before Bristol Crown Court on 13th April this year for the Bristol fatality and was fined £100,000 plus costs of £48,795 after pleading guilty to breaching health and safety at work regulations. In mitigation, Rubb said it had no previous convictions and had entered an early guilty plea and has put a new safety management system in place and reviewed its method statement.

Frain said: "The company failed in its duty to ensure there was a properly planned and supervised

means of working. There should have been no need to work directly on the roof and adequate safety measures must be in place to protect all workers in order to prevent tragic incidents, such as this. Steven Watson should have been properly protected by Rubb Buildings, but instead he lost his life."

The principal contractor at Bristol Airport - Volkerfitzpatrick Ltd - was also prosecuted in October 2009, when it was fined £6,000 plus £10,146 in costs.

*Climbing out of a platform onto a roof can be highly dangerous*



## Who trained him then?

A man with a boat saving the modest cost of a platform by using a makeshift steel scaffold tower to carry out work on the mast. Is all this effort and risk worth the £100 he saved?

## Cluttered site/unsafe lifting costs £20,000

John Doyle Construction Ltd of Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, UK has been fined after an employee was seriously hurt when he was struck by steel beams falling from a tower crane. Stephen James, 58, was working as a slinger for the company at a residential development at Wilton Plaza, Victoria in September 2007. James had slung 20, 2.7 metre long steel beams using a twin leg set of chains so that they could be moved across the site. As the load was lowered it hit a piece of reinforcing bar protruding from a first floor slab. The chain legs came together allowing the beams to slip free.

James suffered multiple injuries including severe damage to his right arm and leg and now has a metal plate in his head and has been unable to work since his accident. A Health & Safety Executive investigation found the lift was not carried out in safe manner and the site was congested with building materials, the HSE asserted that there should have been a specified safe zone for lifting the company was fined £2,000 with costs of £17,466

HSE inspector Monica Babb said: "The terrible injuries Mr James suffered in this incident should and could have been avoided. This type of incident illustrates the importance of lifting operations being properly supervised and carried out in a safe manner. The site should have been tidier and there should have been a specific area set aside for lifting operations."

# Fatal telehandler accident costs £20,000

**A family farm in East Lothian, Scotland, was fined £20,000 after one of its workers was crushed to death by a one-tonne concrete panel being lifted by a telehandler. On 3 June 2008, the man was helping to build a wall for a barn, when the pre-cast concrete panel fell and crushed him. He died from his injuries at the scene.**

The Health & Safety Executive investigation found that there had been no risk assessment carried out for the project. While the telescopic handler and the slings and hooks

were all in good order, no suitable lifting attachment had been fitted to the telehandler forks, meaning that it was inevitable that the slings would slip and slide on the forks especially as the panels needed to be rotated into position. Suspending the concrete panel from lifting slings supported by the forks did not allow the panel to rotate freely as it would have done if supported by a crane hook.

Hamilton Famers (East Lothian) of Garvald Mains Farm, Garvald, pleaded guilty to breaching Health



& Safety at Work rules. HSE Inspector Gillian McLean said: "Tragically this worker was needlessly crushed to death because his employers failed to properly assess the risks and implement a safe system of work. The use of precast concrete panels

to build farm buildings is common place as is the practice of farmers 'having a go' at the construction when they are not properly trained or equipped in structural engineering and health and safety practices."

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