

St Helens steel firm fined over worker's injuries

Monday 30 April, 2012

A St Helens steel manufacturer has been sentenced after a worker suffered serious injuries to his left hand when it was pulled into machinery.

Hi Tech Steel Services Ltd was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the incident at its factory at Bold Industrial Estate on Neills Road on 25 June 2011.

The 43-year-old from Thatto Heath received a cut, six and a half centimetres in length, between the third and ring finger on his left hand. He also suffered crush injuries to the tips of his fingers.

St Helens Magistrates Court heard the worker had been able to gain access to a machine, used to produce reels of thin steel strips, while it was still operating. He was taping up the end of one of the strips to stop it flapping about in the machine when his hand was pulled in.

Hi Tech Steel Services pleaded guilty to two health and safety offences after it failed to ensure the safety of its employees, and failed to carry out a suitable assessment of the risks to workers. The company was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay £1,797 in prosecution costs on Friday 27 April 2012.

Speaking after the hearing, the investigating inspector at HSE, Christina Goddard, said:

"One of the factory's employees suffered a serious injury to his left hand as a result of this incident, but it could have been much worse."

"He was lucky not to have lost part of his hand, or to have suffered permanent damage to the nerves, blood vessels or tendons."

"It should never have been possible for him to tape up the loose ends of metal strips in the machine while it could still be operated."

"But this had become standard practice at the company as no assessment had been carried out into how taping up the ends of the steel could be done safely."

According to the latest figures, nearly 4,000 people suffered a major injury while working in the manufacturing industry in Great Britain in 2010/11 and 27 lost their lives. Information on improving safety is available at www.hse.gov.uk/manufacturing.

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