

Lift fatality lands scaffold firm with £60k fine

Nearly seven years after 37-year-old Andrew Bowes was killed by dropped metalwork, the companies responsible have been handed fines.

Preston Crown Court this week heard how, on 12th March 2012, Andrew Bowes, a metal fabricator employed by Larkin Eng Services Ltd, died while working at the company's premises on an industrial estate in Barrow in Furness.

Larkin Eng had contracted Cumbria Design Scaffold Ltd to collect two large metal walkways and deliver them to a customer using a flatbed lorry fitted with a loader crane. Mr Bowes, who had only been working for the company a week, was told to help with the lifting operation. The first walkway had been lifted onto the back of the lorry but was not fastened down. As the crane moved to pick up the second walkway, a sling became snagged on the first walkway, causing it to tip over and fall from the back of the lorry and onto Mr Bowes who sustained fatal crush injuries.

An investigation by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) found that Cumbria Design Scaffold Ltd had failed to plan the lifting operation properly. The company failed to recognise the risks involved and did not have a safe system of work for what was a complex lift. Cumbria Design Scaffold Ltd also failed to supervise the lifting operation properly. As a consequence, the lifting operation was poorly organised and controlled, placing those in the immediate vicinity at significant risk.

The investigation also found that Larkin Eng Services Ltd had failed in its duty to ensure the safety of Mr Bowes. It had directed Mr Bowes to become actively involved while the operation was taking place.

Cumbria Design Scaffold Ltd of Ulverston, Cumbria pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It was ordered to pay fines of £60,000 and costs of £27,464.28.

Larkin Eng Services Ltd of Barrow in Furness, Cumbria pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It was ordered to pay fines of £20,000 and costs of £27,211.09.

HSE inspector Anthony Banks said after the hearing: "We would like to thank Andrew's family for their patience throughout what has been a complex investigation.

"Companies should always ensure that lifting operations are properly planned, organised and conducted safely. Had this lifting operation been properly planned and supervised, then this tragedy could have been averted. HSE will take enforcement action against both clients and contractors who fail to meet the required standards."