

Two companies fined following death of worker

Worker killed in crush incident after firms had ‘failed to properly plan the lifting operation’.

Andrew Bowes, a 37-year-old metal fabricator employed by Larkin Engineering Services Ltd, died while working at the company’s premises on Meeting Industrial Estate in Barrow in Furness. The incident happened in March 2012.

Larkin Engineering Services Ltd 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 mounted crane. Mr Bowes was directed to assist with the lifting operation by his employer. 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 onto Mr Bowes who sustained fatal crush injuries.

In respect of Cumbria Design Scaffold Ltd, the HSE’s investigation found that the company had failed to:

- Properly plan the lifting operation;
- Recognise the risks involved and did not have a safe system of work for what was a complex lift;
- 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.

In terms of Larkin Engineering Services Ltd, the investigation found it had failed in its duty to ensure the safety of Mr Bowes. It had directed Mr Bowes, who had only been working for the company a week, to become actively involved whilst 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 and was fined £60,000 with costs of £27,464.28.

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

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Anthony Banks said: *“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.”

