

Builder fined for lack of safety measures

Construction company Rivergate Developments has been fined £20,000 for safety breaches after a worker fell through an open stairwell.

Leeds Magistrates' court heard how, on 31st May 2017, 26-year-old Nathan Howes was working on the upper floor of a cricket club in Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire which was under refurbishment. Mr Howes was removing a Genie powered access platform from the forks of a lift truck, so that steel beams could be lifted into place, when he stepped back and fell through the stairwell opening.

His injuries included a fractured spine, a fractured skull and a small collapse of one of his lungs. He was hospitalised for six days and has still not yet been able to return to work, nearly two years later.

An investigation by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) found that Rivergate Developments Ltd had carried out a Risk Assessment which identified there would be gaps in the floor through which a person could fall. However, it failed to put in place any measures to either prevent or mitigate the consequences of a fall. There was no edge protection or fall arrest system deployed, for example.

Rivergate Developments Ltd of Rivergate House, Carrhill Road, Mossley, Lancashire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £1,020 in costs.

HSE inspector Jayne Towe said after the hearing: *"Falls from height often result in life-changing or fatal injuries. In most cases, these incidents are needless and could be prevented by properly planning the work to ensure that effective preventative and protective measures are in place such as edge protection or barriers built to the correct standard. This incident could have easily been prevented if the company had installed adequate edge protection around the opening to prevent falls."*



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