

Construction company fined after failing to implement its own Risk Assessment

Construction firm Rivergate Developments Ltd has been fined for safety breaches after a worker fell 2.7 metres through an open stairwell.

Leeds Magistrates' court was told how, on 31 May 2017, Nathan Howes, 26, 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 lift' from the forks of a lift truck, so that steel beams could be lifted into place, when he stepped backwards and fell through the stairwell opening. Mr Howes sustained multiple injuries including a fractured spine, a fractured skull and a small collapse of one of his lungs. He spent six days in hospital and still attends physiotherapy as an outpatient. He has not yet been able to return to work.

The HSE's investigation 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, they failed to put in place any measures to either prevent or mitigate the consequences of a fall. Such measures include the use of fixed edge protection systems to prevent falls or the use of fall arrest bags to mitigate falls.

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.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Jayne Towey commented: "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."

