

Family firm's director admits guilt over agency worker's factory scalping

The director of a family firm founded in Warrington with the ambition “to be the best” has pleaded guilty to two health and safety charges after an agency worker was scalped in an industrial accident in June 2016.

Paul Carney, who had denied any wrongdoing and was set to stand trial this week at Liverpool Crown Court, pleaded guilty to two counts, relating to employees and non-employees, at a hearing on 10 June.

The company, Cheshire Mouldings and Woodturnings, which has been providing woodworking supplies for more than 30 years, admitted failing to discharge its general health, safety and welfare duty, to both employees and non-employees, in November.

The crown court was told that Karolina Lubieniecka was scalped when her hair became caught in a machine at the firm's unit in Norman Road, Sutton, St Helens, on 30 June 2016. The agency worker, who also lost an ear and a thumb, was left visually impaired.

According to the *Liverpool Echo*, Lubieniecka sustained the life-changing injuries while working on a Weinig 2020 production line, which produces timber stair parts, balustrades, decking, flooring and mouldings.

Carney admitted he “*consented to or connived at or by his neglect caused or contributed to the commission of the offences*” by the company.

It failed to ensure workers “*were not exposed to risks to their health and safety while working on or in proximity to the Weinig 2020 production line*”.

Judge Robert Trevor-Jones said that Carney and Cheshire Mouldings and Woodturnings would be sentenced on 2 July and granted the director bail.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) served Cheshire Mouldings and Woodturnings with an improvement notice on 6 July 2016 for failing “*to take effective measures to prevent access to numerous trapping points created by moving parts of the strapping section of the Weinig 2020 line...*”. The company complied with the notice on 3 August.

On 20 November 2017, the HSE successfully prosecuted the company for another life-changing injury at the same factory.

The St Helens-based wood mouldings manufacturer was fined £333,333 and ordered to pay £18,599 costs after 27-year-old agency trainee Lenka Toperczer lost four fingers while working at a rotary knife lathe on 8 October 2014.

Toperczer had been at the site only a few weeks and was being trained to operate a Fell rotary knife lathe by an agency colleague. While turning a blank piece of wood at the cutting tool, her hand was pulled into the machine.

The HSE found the guarding on the machine was inadequate, which meant workers could access the rotating cutting tool. The company had also failed to carry out suitable planning for the work.

Liverpool Crown Court heard that although Toperczer could not communicate well in English, training for the machines was not delivered in such a way that full understanding of the procedure could be confirmed with operators whose first language was not English.

The *Warrington Guardian* reported that Cheshire Mouldings and Woodturnings had also been fined in 2001 and 2004 over workers sustaining injuries after accidents at the factory.