

Fine following 'Impractical and unsafe' forklift use

A telecommunication inspection and maintenance company has been fined after a forklift truck overturned during an unsafe lifting operation.

On 11 February 2017, two forklifts on Springwood Industrial Estate were being used to level a support column by repeatedly pushing it with one truck and then "catching" it with the other. The HSE has described this operation as 'high risk', leaving one worker to carry out this unsafe work practice on his own.

As a result, the column rolled on its base and fell – pulling over the forklift truck it was attached to. The operator escaped injury as he was operating the other forklift truck at the time. The company then went on to use two forklift trucks to try to right the overturned truck which was also unsafe and put workers at risk.

Investigating, the HSE found that Swann I&M Services Limited did not properly plan and supervise this lifting operation to ensure it was carried out safely.

Swann I&M Services Limited of Tonbridge, Kent pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 8(1) of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. It was fined £54,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,442.80.

Speaking after the case, HSE Inspector Tim Underwood said: *"The use of forklift trucks was both impractical and unsafe, putting workers at unnecessary risk. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply having a competent person plan a safe lifting operation and providing adequate supervision to ensure the lifting operation was carried out safely. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."*



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