

## Firm fined £30k after worker's legs crushed

**An Alness-based company has been fined after an operative was severely injured after falling 2-3 metres into a compactor chamber and a ram crushed his legs.**

On 12 November 2018, an employee was attempting to clear a blockage in a infeed hopper by use of a wooden bar, while the machine was in automatic mode at Beechwood Waste Transfer Station. The blockage was too large to dislodge so the worker got into the hopper and, while holding onto the edge, jumped up and down on the blockage in an attempt to free it. As this was ineffective, a colleague then climbed up the outside of the infeed hopper and jumped inside. The blockage then gave way and the worker fell some 2-3 metres into the compaction chamber. A ram activated and commenced compressing the material, the operative attempted to climb out but before he could do so the ram crushed his legs.

The HSE's investigation found that blockages occurred because large cardboard boxes would catch on a lip between the wooden superstructure and the metal structure of the hopper. Workers cleared blockages by climbing up the outside of the baler, and the absence of guarding meant operatives were able to access the infeed hopper. No safe system to isolate the machine from the power was in operation in order to deal with blockages safely.

William Munro Construction (Highland) Limited, Riverside Drive, Teaninich Industrial Estate, Alness pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £30,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Norman Schouten said: *"This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices and communicating them to the employees in their own language."*

*"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."*

