

Scaffolder's signature forged on safety briefing register before 12 m plunge

A scaffolder who was signed in at a safety briefing despite not being present later fell 12 m from a scaffolding structure at a Port Talbot steelworks.

Stephen Kift sustained multiple life-changing injuries at Tata Steel's plant in South Wales in 2014 and he continues to suffer from poor health.

Kift's employer, Rowecord Total Access, has been fined £9,600 over the incident and ordered to pay £32,544 in costs.

Swansea Crown Court was told that Kift was part of a team disassembling a 21 m-high scaffolding structure on 18 January 2014, following maintenance work on an angle tower at the site's Morfa coke ovens.

The workers removed a plate in the scaffolding, so they could clear debris below, and erected a temporary edge protection system around the gap, *Wales Online* reported.

However, Kift, whose safety line was not attached at the time, fell through the hole. He struck a steel girder – a support beam used in construction – before landing on another girder.

He now uses crutches for walking, is in constant pain and cannot sleep for longer than four hours at a time.

Rowecord pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety regulations. Tata Steel was cleared of safety offences.

A previous trial of both companies was prematurely stopped last November after it was revealed one of Kift's colleagues had forged his signature on a register, claiming he had received a safety briefing that he had not attended.

According to *BBC News*, Judge Peter Heywood said: *"It is clear that a briefing took place, but it is clear that Mr Kift was not present and someone falsely signed on his behalf."*

Anna Vigers, QC, for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said the safety briefing for scaffold workers *"should have been more robust" and the fact someone was able to pretend they had been there "speaks to a failure to ensure everything was done as it should have been"*, *Wales Online* reported.

An investigation found that Rowecord also had failed to properly plan and supervise the work at height.

Simon Morgan, defending Rowecord, said this had been an isolated incident; the company took safety and health legislation very seriously and had a good track record, he said.

The company lost its contract with Tata Steel following the fall.