

## Suez worker injured while moving steps weighing nearly a tonne

**Waste management company Suez Recycling and Recovery ignored workers' concerns about a procedure for manually moving steps weighing almost one tonne until a worker hurt his back, a court has heard.**

Preston Crown Court was told that employee Nadeem Akhtar sustained prolapsed discs in his back in September 2016 while manoeuvring gantry steps following repair works at the company's site in Haslingden, Lancashire.

It was a common practice for workers to use scaffolding poles under the 950 kg steps to manually move them back into position, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found.

Site managers knew about the hazardous practice because it had been reported by staff at the household waste centre, however they failed to risk assess the task and did not implement a safe working method for moving the steps.

Suitable equipment or handling aids had not been considered to help the workers safely manoeuvre the entry steps, the HSE said.

The *Lancashire Telegraph* reported that Craig Morris, prosecuting, said that just weeks before Akhtar's injury bosses failed to act on a team leader's warning that the method used to move the steps was risky and it often took workers several attempts.

The court was told that Suez did provide guidance on manual handling and now deploys a loader crane if the steps need moving, according to the *Lancashire Telegraph*.

Passing sentence, Judge Philip Parry was reported as saying: *"This incident caused Mr Akhtar to suffer a flare-up of an existing back condition."*

He fined Suez £144,000 and ordered it pay costs of £32,000 after it pleaded guilty to breaching s 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

HSE inspector Sharon Butler said: *"Incorrect manual handling is one of the most common causes of injury at work. If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to the incident, the injuries sustained by the employee could have been prevented."*

Suez was fined £220,000 in June 2017 after an employee sustained severe burns to his upper body and face in an incident at its waste energy facility in Billingham, County Durham, in 2014.

