

Two falls – one from a telehandler in a shipyard – failure to think through risks

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The UK Health and Safety Executive (UK HSE) has published two recent news alerts covering prosecutions of companies responsible for someone falling from height.

Incident 1

Two companies were fined after a worker was killed when he fell from a telehandler in a shipyard. A 50-year-old self-employed contractor working on fabrication and installation of roller shutter doors on an extension to a slipway building in a shipyard. He was working at height with a co-worker on the telehandler when it came into contact with fencing. When the telehandler was released from the obstruction it caused the basket to jerk, throwing both operators from the basket. The contractor was not clipped onto the basket and fell to the ground sustaining fatal injuries.

The investigation found that the risks that could occur with this task had not been properly thought through or assessed by the two companies involved.

Incident 2

A company with a brand name known throughout the UK was fined £2 million after a worker was hospitalised following a fall. The incident occurred when a worker with six years' experience at this particular plant was cleaning a mixing machine, a routine job he carried out every few weeks. He lost his footing and fell nearly 2 metres. He was hospitalised with a compression fracture in his spine.

Investigation revealed that the company routinely expected their workers to access the top of the mixing machines to clean them. In doing so, the workers were often unbalanced and would brace themselves to stop from falling. The workers were not adequately supervised and there had been no training on how the mixer needed to be cleaned at height. The company failed to control the risk of falls from height when carrying out this routine cleaning activity.

The HSE noted: *“This case highlights how important it is for companies to fully assess the risks from work activities at height and to take appropriate action to prevent injury in the workplace. This should have been prevented, falls from height is one of the biggest killers in the workplace and even falls from fairly low levels can be extremely dangerous.”*

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls



Line of fire



Working at height

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