

£180,000 MACHINE MAINTENANCE INCIDENT

Company **Fined £180,000** After Employee's Hand Injured in Machine

Vita Cellular Foams (UK) Ltd. was **fined £180,000** and [ordered](#) to pay costs of £4,377 after an employee lost her hand following a machine maintenance incident. The employee was operating a blown line machine at the company's premises in Dukinfield on 30th June 2020 when the apparatus became blocked with fibres. Attempting to identify the blockage, the employee unscrewed a Perspex window. Although the machine was isolated from the main power supply, residual power caused it to regain movement, dragging the employee's hand in. The tragic incident resulted in life-changing injuries for the worker, whose right hand was amputated following surgery.

An investigation by the HSE found that the company had failed to properly assess the risk of removing blockages from machines, despite blockages occasionally occurring. While the company had added a Perspex window to allow operators to identify machine blockages, it had not been fitted with an interlocking guard, which would have prohibited employees from accessing machine parts while the apparatus was operational. Furthermore, the company hadn't reviewed its risk assessments since introducing the Perspex window nor installed a safe system of work. On 17th January 2023, Vita Cellular Foams (UK) Ltd. pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

What Could Have Been Done?

Such a tragic accident demonstrates what can go wrong should employers not abide by HSE regulations. Employers can fulfil their obligations by conducting thorough risk assessments, including for any new ways of working. Additionally, employers should ensure that comprehensive training is provided to all employees using machinery, particularly those involved in its maintenance.

For additional workplace safety and risk management guidance, **contact us today.**

