

News release

WM/202/08

18th July, 2008**HSE WARNS OF THE DANGERS OF WORKING AT HEIGHT
AFTER WORKER FALLS THROUGH ROOF**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning company directors and owners of the importance of implementing safe systems for working at height. This warning follows the prosecution of a **Burton-on-Trent** company after an incident in **Uttoxeter** when a worker, from **Swadlincote**, Derbyshire, was seriously injured.

Forster Refurbishment and Property Services Ltd, of Branston Road, Burton-on-Trent was (on Thursday 17th July) ordered, by Staffordshire Magistrates, to pay £7,000 in fines, with £3,138 costs after pleading guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The court heard that, on 2nd April, 2007, two employees were working on the roof of a large industrial unit in Stubby Lane, Uttoxeter when one of them, working in the valley gutter, fell onto the neighbouring roof pitch which gave way, causing the man to fall more than 4.5 metres (15ft) onto a concrete floor below. He sustained serious injuries but has been able to return to work.

Sufficient measures had not been taken to support or protect anyone from falling off or through the fragile roofs where the company was renewing industrial roofing.

HSE Inspector Tariq Khan said: "Regulations require employers to not only ensure that a safe system of work is followed but also that adequate supervision, training and equipment are provided. This is particularly essential when carrying out highly specialised and dangerous work on fragile roofs. Forster Refurbishment and Property Services Ltd failed to implement suitable measures to prevent a fall or to provide safety netting below

the fragile roof. There was also inadequate supervision of the work on a roof measuring in excess of 80 long and 80 metres wide. The employee who fell is lucky to be alive; we would not normally expect someone falling from that height onto a concrete floor to survive. Such falls remain one of the biggest killers of workers and last year, across the country, in the construction industry alone 10 employees were killed, 13 self-employed killed and 3,409 seriously injured after falling from height.

“Many incidents could be avoided if companies ensured that they had thought through a safe way of tackling a job, provided all necessary protective equipment and ensured workers were fully trained and properly supervised. Precautions that need to be taken to prevent falls are often simple and there is ample free guidance readily available to help companies take the right action.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 states: “it shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety”.
2. Further information on falls from height can be found at:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm>
3. Information on construction safety can be found at
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/index.htm>

HSE information and news releases can be accessed on the Internet www.hse.gov.uk/

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