

## CASE STUDY: FATALITY FOLLOWING FALL FROM STEP LADDER



The following case study outlines an incident at a wholesale bakery. In this case, both the bakery and their company manager were prosecuted following the death of a handyman who sustained fatal injuries after falling from a stepladder.

### **Summary**

The handyman had been asked to build shelving in the company's storeroom by the site manager. He was making and fitting timber shelving to a racking system using tools and materials provided by the company. During the morning he had been seen standing on a stepladder while working on the shelving. At around midday he was found lying on the floor bleeding from a severe head wound, with the stepladder beside him. He was taken to hospital, but died two months later as a result of his injuries. During the subsequent investigation inspectors issued a Prohibition Notice stopping any work at height because of the unsuitability of all access equipment. The stepladder which was deemed to be in very poor condition was taken from the bakery by HSE inspectors. The manager who had appointed the handyman failed to provide a safe system of work.

### **Action**

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined a nominal sum (£1) as the company had ceased trading, with considerable debts, between the accident and court hearing. The company's manager also pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was fined a total of £300 and ordered to pay costs of £200.

### **Advice**

After the hearing, the HSE's Inspector said:

"The consequences of this tragic incident will be felt by the deceased's family for ever but it was so easily preventable. As the risk of a fall was foreseeable, the company and its manager should have carried out a full site-specific risk assessment and planned and organised the work to be carried out in a safe manner.

"Where access to heights is required, even for relatively short term work, they are ultimately responsible for assessing and planning the work and ensuring that it is carried out in a safe manner using suitable access equipment."