

CASE STUDY: YOUNG WORKER LOSES FINGER IN UNGUARDED MACHINE



Summary

A food production company has been fined after a 16-year-old worker had to have his finger amputated after it became trapped in an unguarded machine.

The teenager was attempting to clear a blockage on a biscuit crumbing machine when the incident occurred.

He reached too far into the hopper and his right hand was pulled into a screw conveyor, a machine which uses a rotating screw blade to break biscuits as they travel up a tube. He injured a number of fingers, but his middle finger was so badly damaged it had to be amputated.

The investigation found that both the hopper and the screw conveyor were unguarded, and had been since the machine was bought several years earlier.

The Court were told that the worker, who is now 17, left the company following the incident as it was only intended to be a part-time job until he started a college plumbing course. He missed two months of the course but has since made good progress and is catching up with his peers.

Action

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Wolverhampton magistrates fined the company £7,000 with full costs of £4,000.

Advice

Speaking after the Court hearing, the HSE inspector said: "To be injured so seriously just a few weeks into his working life has been profoundly upsetting for this young man. The incident was entirely avoidable. The risks of clearing blockages had not been properly identified. If they had been, workers would not have been able to access dangerous moving parts of machinery. "The company has since fitted a guard. It is just a shame they did not do this before someone suffered life changing injuries.