CASE STUDY:
SOUP COMPANY FINED FOR LIFE CHANGING INJURIES

One of the UK's most well-known food manufacturers was today sentenced after a worker suffered severe injuries while working on one of its production lines.

The company appeared at Elgin Sheriff Court after a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found safety failings related to the incident.

The court heard that a short term contract worker climbed onto the conveyor belt to clear potatoes into the auger in-feed, but slipped from the belt into the collecting hopper.

The workers' body was pulled into the auger and he was trapped for an hour while orthopaedic surgeons and other emergency services battled to free him. Once freed, he was flown by air ambulance for emergency treatment.

His right foot was partially amputated and he underwent a number of operations including the insertion of a metal plate and screws. However, his left foot could not be saved and he underwent a below the knee amputation of his left leg. He now wears a prosthetic leg.

The Sheriff was told that on the line, the various different types of vegetables needed to be kept separate. To move the last few vegetables of the batch, operators used a ladder to access the conveyor belt and then used a squeegee to push the vegetables over the end of the conveyor into the auger.

On that day, as the batch of potatoes came to an end, Mr Cormack put the squeegee over the edge of the hopper and once he'd stopped the conveyor belt climbed onto it to retrieve the squeegee to push the remaining potatoes off the conveyor belt and into the auger.

The court heard that the company had failed to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which workers were exposed when they were engaged in the task of clearing vegetables from the conveyor belt. It also failed to reasonably provide and maintain plant and a system of work for the task that was safe, and failed to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as was necessary to ensure, the health and safety at work of employees carrying out that the task.

The court also heard that the company was recently prosecuted for a previous accident in which a worker received hand injuries when his fingers were drawn between the rollers of a conveyor.

The business admitted breaching Section 2(1) and Section 33(1) (a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 at and was fined £60,000.