IN COURT

Company fined after worker paralysed by fall at Watford Football Stadium

Safety & Health Practitioner (https://www.shponline.co.uk/author/shp/)

A construction firm has been fined after a worker was paralysed after falling 11 metres down a stairwell at a football stadium when the concrete floor he was working on collapsed.

Workers were constructing a new hospitality and seating stand at the stadium of Watford Football Club, Peterborough Magistrates' Court was told. On 14 June 2016, the concrete floor and associated formwork collapsed causing a number of workers to fall. Most of the workers were able to cling to the structure to escape serious injury. However, Ashley Grealish fell approximately 11 metres down the mouth of a stairwell to the basement below sustaining multiple injuries including spinal damage, which caused permanent paralysis from the waist down.

The HSE's (https://www.shponline.co.uk/legislation-and-guidance/health-safety-executive-hse/) investigation found that the company's temporary works management system was lacking. The contractor should have had a suitable design for the temporary works, which are part of a construction project needed to enable the permanent structure to be built, taking proper account of the vertical load and the need for horizontal stability. There should also have been a robust system to check the temporary works were properly installed and thoroughly assessed before starting to load it with the wet concrete to form the floor slab.

ECS Groundwork Ltd of Warren Farm, Colney Heath, St Albans pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 19 (1), 19(2) and 19(3) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. The company was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £14,505.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Rauf Ahmed said: "The injuries suffered by Mr Grealish are life changing and the incident could easily have been fatal. This serious incident and devastation could have been avoided if the company had planned a safe system of work to prevent the support system used to cast the concrete floor from collapsing."