Revealed: Raft of safety failings that led to tragic Watford stadium collapse

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A raft of safety failings led to a tragic floor collapse during work at Watford FC's Vicarage Roa the lead investigator for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed.

Last week, ECS Groundwork was fined for breaching several safety regulations while worki extension to Watford FC's Vicarage Road stadium in 2016, leading to the collapse of the dev and the paralysis of one of the workers.

The accident happened in June 2016 during a project to install extra seats and a hospitality a stadium.

Several workers fell when the floor and associated formwork collapsed, with most clinging t structure and escaping serious injury. However, one of the workers, Ashley Grealish, fell 11ı stairwell and damaged his spine, leaving him permanently paralysed from the waist down.

HSE inspector Rauf Ahmed, who investigated the collapse, told *NCE* that a series of safety shortcomings led to the incident.

Safety failings included the incorrect set-up of a decking system, poor use of data and an ina process of checking site safety.

The contractor was using a Peri decking system, which features a grid of legs (props) that ex the floor below to hold up a temporary platform, on top of which the new floor can be cons

In this case, the concrete that was being cast to create the top floor of the stadium's north ea expansion was about 250mm thick with a metal formwork throughout the structure. The de system should have been enough to support the layer, but Ahmed explained that it had not implemented correctly.

"From the laser scans we did, the props were positioned far in excess of what they should ha Ahmed said. "When you go through the whole design process to fit up a simplified level, th centres should be about 1.5m apart, but some of them extended to about 3m."

The workers' proximity to the stairwell, into which the injured party Grealish fell, also adde precariousness of the situation. The Combisafe system around the stairwell mouth added w floor, and "the extension of the props over the stairwell were exceeded", according to Ahme

Peri publishes data and offers specialist software to help calculate how to safely implement i for each individual project, but it had not been properly utilised in this case.

"One of the mistakes this contractor made is they didn't use the official data," Ahmed reveal used some data [from Peri], but that was to do with pricing, and that is in no way shape or f or designed for the safety side of things."

Ahmed said that “temporary works coordinators will know this like the back of their hand”, TWC assigned to the project was rarely on site and could not warn the contractor of the dai situation.

“He was based at another site, he wasn’t attending this site as he should have been and he wa checking the design as he should have been,” Ahmed said. “He wasn't appointed officially; h recognise that he was supposed to be the temporary works coordinator.”

Although collapses like this and many more serious ones occur regularly, Ahmed believes tl need for a change to the safety measures.

“The regulations are fit for purpose, they spell it out in black and white,” he said. “It's really contractors to make sure that they follow it and have to have the people in place to do the tl are required.”

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