

Global firms sentenced after worker killed

Date:

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Two global companies have been sentenced after a worker was killed and another seriously injured during construction of an offshore wind farm.

The incident happened when a team of engineers were loading wind turbine blades onto a sea barge for delivery to Greater Gabbard, off the Suffolk coast, on 21 May 2010.

During the loading of wind turbine components at Pakeston Quay, Harwich, a 2.11 tonne part of the blade transport arrangement fell off, crushing and fatally injuring one worker and seriously injuring another.

Chelmsford Crown Court heard both workers were employed by Siemens Windpower A/S (SWP) but were working for Fluor Ltd, the principal contractor.

The injured man, Frank Kroeger, was airlifted to Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge where he was resuscitated twice. He suffered a ruptured spleen, lacerations to his liver, a collapsed lung collapsing, multiple rib fractures on his left side, and significant crush injuries to his right arm and hand, with nerve damage to his thumb and fingers.

His injuries were life-changing and required almost three weeks in hospital in the UK, followed by a long period of rehabilitation and treatment near his home in Germany.

The family of the fatally-injured man have asked that his name not be released.

The investigation carried out by HSE found serious safety failings in the two firms' management systems for the loading operation, which allowed vital parts of equipment to go unchecked before being lifted.

Following a four-week trial in July, prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Fluor Ltd was found guilty of breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was today ordered to pay £275,000 in fines and £271,048 costs.

Siemens Windpower A/S (SWP) were charged with the same offence and also a Section 2 (1) breach of the same act, but pleaded guilty at an earlier stage. They were also sentenced today and ordered to pay £375,000 in fines with costs of £105,355.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Julie Rayner said: “This incident could easily have been avoided had suitable systems and procedures been in place to ensure that all loads were properly connected whilst being lifted.

“Had the right questions been asked when the lift was being planned and had the bolt and two brackets holding the blade and frame together been checked before they were lifted, the death and serious injury of two workers could have been prevented.

“This case clearly highlights the need to ensure that relevant information is considered when lift plans are produced to ensure that all of the relevant risks are considered.”

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement.

hse.gov.uk^[1]

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/^[2]

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>^[3]

Media contacts

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

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