

Honda worker loses 2 fingers after being distracted

Car giant Honda has been fined for safety failings after a worker severed two fingers inside a rotating machine. Cesar Santos, 55, was working at Honda UK's car plant in Swindon when the incident took place on 11 February 2012. He was using an emery cloth to polish a metal component as it rotated on a manual lathe.

He was being observed by a group of supervisors and management, who asked him how much longer he would be. While he was being distracted the glove on his right hand became entangled in the equipment and severed two fingers. He was unable to return to work for six weeks owing to his injuries, and still requires assistance from colleagues at times.

The HSE investigated the incident and found the company had not carried out a sufficient risk assessment and the method of work was unsafe. It also failed to enforce its own glove policy, which stated gloves should not be worn while using machinery.

HSE inspector Ian Whittles said: "If an emery cloth is held by hand and wrapped round a work piece, there is a high risk of it becoming entangled. Wearing gloves also increases the risk of entanglement and for these reasons, hand application of emery cloth should be avoided. In the case of machinery, moving parts that could cause injury should be guarded, or made safe, so that people cannot come into contact with them. In this instance, a tool holder could have been used, or the component could have been taken off the lathe and polished by hand. This incident could have easily been prevented had there been a safe system of work in place and the company's glove policy had been enforced. Honda clearly failed to ensure the safety of its employees, with painful consequences for Mr Santos."

Honda of the UK Manufacturing Ltd appeared at Swindon Magistrates' Court on 4 February and pleaded guilty to breaching s2(1) of the HSWA 1974. It was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £5959 in costs.

Source: SHP 5 Feb 2013