

Missing locking pins on racking caused death

A paper manufacturer has admitted failing to adequately maintain a racking system, which collapsed, resulting in a worker sustaining fatal injuries from falling stock.

Northampton Crown Court heard the incident took place at Merley Paper Converters Ltd's warehouse in Corby, on 16 March 2009.

Desanka Todorovic, 44, asked a forklift-truck operator to retrieve some flat-pack boxes from racking inside the warehouse. In order to access the boxes, the forklift operator used his vehicle to lift a pallet, which was positioned on top of the boxes. As he was lowering the pallet, the racking collapsed and several boxes of till rolls fell and landed on Mrs Todorovic, partially burying her underneath. She died shortly afterwards from crush injuries.



The HSE investigated the incident and found the racking was in a poor condition. The rack's horizontal beams were not properly engaged in the uprights and hadn't been secured with locking pins. The company was issued a Prohibition Notice, which ordered workers to stay out of the warehouse until the racking was made safe.

HSE inspector Roger Amery told SHP: "Had Merley Paper Converters properly erected and then properly maintained its racking, this incident would never have happened. Quite a few companies attend to their machinery and health risks quite diligently, but then take their racking storage systems for granted. They fail to subject these to the inspections and maintenance that are essential. This neglect is sometimes accompanied by a general failure to grasp that quite small defects within a loaded racking system can have a massive effect on overall stability."

Merley Paper Converters appeared in court on 13 February and pleaded guilty to breaching s2(1) of the HSWA 1974. It was fined £70,000 and ordered to pay £30,974 in costs.

In mitigation, the company said it had engaged the services of a health and safety consultancy prior to the incident and feels it was let down by the advice it received. The firm also said it cooperated with the investigation and quickly complied with the enforcement notice.

Source: SHP 19th Feb 2013