

Woman crushed to death by forklift truck

A 49-year-old woman was crushed to death by a forklift truck at an Avonmouth warehouse. The deceased, Ms Brennan, was struck by a forklift truck driven by replenishment supervisor Ben Morris.

Mr Morris described said he was loading pallets of Pringles into the back of a lorry ready for delivery when the incident happened. He said: "As I was reversing round I looked over my shoulder and I couldn't see anything. Then I felt the rear left wheel lift up in the air."

An HSE inspector told an inquest he had seen staff using loading equipment as scooters at Booker Wholesale cash and carry in Avonmouth as he studied CCTV recordings after the death of warehouse assistant Ann Brennan.

There was no speed limit and no segregation between pedestrians and vehicles in the loading bay where the fatal incident occurred, where there had been several previous "near-misses".

The Brooker Area Manager Mr French was then questioned about health and safety measures in the warehouse, admitting there was

- No segregation policy at that time, between pedestrians and vehicles.
- No existing policy in the goods-in area, and
- No speed limit.

Ronald Crandon, the driver of the lorry which was being loaded at the time of the incident, told the court he had witnessed incidents in the past. He also added that he believed there were safety measures in place. However, the HSE found that there were no such measures in place.

The HSE inspector told the coroner it was the responsibility of the employer to prepare their work place to avoid contact by separating pedestrians from vehicles.

He said: "There were no specific walkways for pedestrians and no marked areas. As far as I am aware there was nothing to separate the vehicles and pedestrians. Most of the staff weren't aware of the risk assessment in that area. The only control measure, if you can call it that, is to be aware that forklifts are operating."

During his investigation, he looked back at a random sample of working days through the company's CCTV. He noted an "untidy" warehouse with "vehicles working in very close proximity to pedestrians". He added that there were no high visibility jackets being worn in the heavily stocked area and on one occasion he saw members of staff "using a hand truck as a scooter".

The inquest continues.

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