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Health and Safety Executive warning to construction industry after crane overturns

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned the construction industry of the need to ensure that mobile crane operations are properly planned and supervised.

The warning follows HSE's prosecution of two construction companies after a 35 tonne truck mounted telescopic crane overturned, after one of the outriggers which support the crane sank into the ground.

The crane driver was forced to leap to safety and the 5.7 tonne beam that was being lifted into place narrowly missed two employees as it fell. The incident happened on the 27 February 2007 at Lingley Mere, Great Sankey, Warrington where a new fire control centre was under construction.

The main Contractor AMEC Group Ltd (Amec) of Northwich was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £9,143 costs and crane operators Leach Structural Steelwork Ltd (Leach) of Preston was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £9,143 costs at Warrington Magistrates Court court.

HSE Inspector Nic Rigby who investigated the case said:

"This prosecution should act a warning to all those involved in crane operations. It was down to chance alone that this incident did not result in multiple fatalities. This would have been avoided had the planning and supervision of the lifting operation not been so deficient.

"The crane overturned because it was being operated, with the knowledge of both companies, in a part of the site that had not been prepared for such activities. The roadway was not wide enough to accommodate the outrigger spread of the crane.

"This failing should have been obvious to all those involved in the planning for, and the operation of, the cranes on that site. Clear warnings were ignored in the run-up to this incident about the ground bearing capacity for the use of cranes on the site. The risk assessments which had been produced were inadequate as they only considered use at a completely different part of the site".

Amec pleaded guilty to breaching section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and Leach pleaded guilty to breaching section 2 (1) of the same Act.

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Section 3 (1) states:
"It shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety."
2. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Section 2 (1) says:
"It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees."
3. For more information on construction safety see: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/index.htm>

Public enquiries: Call HSE's InfoLine, Tel: 08701 545500, or write to: HSE InfoLine, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG. Press enquiries (Journalists only): Clive Naish, Regional Information Officer Tel: 0161 952 4517

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