



# Wilkins Safety Group

**Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

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## *Welcome to our latest Update E-Newsletter*

As ever, please feel free to share this with friends and colleagues. You will also find PDF versions of all our other newsletters on our website: [www.wilkinssafety.co.uk](http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk) with lots more useful information and a wealth of leaflets covering Health and Safety topics.

Over recent weeks we have looked at health issues such as Stress, MSDs so this week we thought we would look at the issue of **Noise Induced Hearing Loss**

**We also look at a couple of recent HSE cases for you to consider. These look at:**

- Christopher Jones was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after a concerned member of the public videoed the incident at Shadlock Skips on Newchurch Road on 1 May 2013..
- A Somerset drinks firm is ordered to pay £155,000 in fines and costs after being prosecuted for a breach in safety following the death of an engineer at their site in Llantrisant

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## ***Noise induced hearing loss.....***

**Hearing loss caused by work is preventable, but once your hearing has gone it will not come back.**

Some 17,000 people in the UK suffer deafness, ringing in the ears or other ear conditions caused by excessive noise at work.

This article is for employers, workers and their advisers. It tells you what you need to do to reduce and control the risks from noise at work.

We also include a Noise induced hearing loss demonstration



## ***Key messages***

- Hearing loss caused by work is preventable but once your hearing has gone it won't come back.
- Damage can cause loss of hearing ability and people may also suffer a permanent sensation of ringing in the ears, known as tinnitus.
- Hearing loss caused by exposure to noise at work continues to be a significant occupational disease. Some 17,000 people in the UK suffer deafness, tinnitus or other ear conditions as a result of exposure to excessive noise at work.
- There are many practical, cost-effective ways of protecting yourself and your workers.
- Factors that contribute to hearing damage are noise levels and how long people are exposed to the noise, daily or over a number of years.
- The most efficient and effective way of controlling noise is by technical and organisational means that protect workers at source, e.g. changes in process, reducing vibration (damping) and reducing time spent in noisy areas.
- Health surveillance or hearing checks are vital to detect and respond to early signs of damage.

## ***The health effects of noise at work***

Noise at work can cause hearing loss that can be temporary or permanent. People often experience temporary deafness after leaving a noisy place. Although hearing recovers within a few hours, this should not be ignored. It is a sign that if you continue to be exposed to the noise your hearing could be permanently damaged. Permanent hearing damage can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud, explosive noises, e.g. from guns or cartridge-operated machines.

But hearing loss is usually gradual because of prolonged exposure to noise. It may only be when damage caused by noise over the years combines with hearing loss due to ageing that people realise how deaf they have become. This may mean their family complains about the television being too loud, they cannot keep up with conversations in a group, or they have trouble using the telephone. Eventually everything becomes muffled and people find it difficult to catch sounds like 't', 'd' and 's', so they confuse similar words.

Hearing loss is not the only problem. People may develop tinnitus (ringing, whistling, buzzing or humming in the ears), a distressing condition which can lead to disturbed sleep.

**Remember: Young people can be damaged as easily as the old.**

## ***Noise induced hearing loss demonstration***

**These recordings demonstrate how hearing is gradually lost over a working life. In the demonstrations you will hear the effects of both noise exposure and ageing on hearing.**

The demonstrations rely on comparing how loud the different sections of the recordings sound to you, so it is important do not adjust the volume after starting to listen to the demonstration. You will need to start off with the volume in the first section of the recording set reasonably high, otherwise you will not be able to hear some of the later simulations.

### **Download**

[Audio demonstration of noise induced hearing loss \[4 mins - 4MB\]](#) (right click & "save target as / link as")

## ***Do you have a noise problem at work?***

This will depend on how loud the noise is and how long people are exposed to it. As a simple guide you will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- Is the noise intrusive - like a busy street, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant - for most of the working day?

- Do your employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2 m apart for at least part of the day?
- Do your employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day?
- Do you work in a noisy industry, e.g. construction, demolition or road repair; woodworking; plastics processing; engineering; textile manufacture; general fabrication; forging, pressing or stamping; paper or board making; canning or bottling; foundries?
- Are there noises due to impacts (such as hammering, drop forging, pneumatic impact tools etc.), explosive sources such as cartridge operated tools or detonators, or guns?

Noise can also be a safety hazard at work, interfering with communication and making warnings harder to hear. Some examples of typical noise levels are shown in the graphic.



### ***How is noise measured?***

Noise is measured in decibels (dB). An 'A-weighting' sometimes written as 'dB(A)', is used to measure average noise levels, and a 'C-weighting' or 'dB(C)', to measure peak, impact or explosive noises. You might just notice a 3 dB change in noise level, because of the way our ears work. Yet every 3 dB doubles the noise, so what might seem like small differences in the numbers can be quite significant.

### ***Employers' responsibilities - legal duties***

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (Noise Regulations 2005) require employers to prevent or reduce risks to health and safety from exposure to noise at work. Employees have duties under the Regulations too. The Regulations require you as an employer to:

- Assess the risks to your employees from noise at work;
- Take action to reduce the noise exposure that produces those risks;
- Provide your employees with hearing protection if you cannot reduce the noise exposure enough by using other methods;
- Make sure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded;
- Provide your employees with information, instruction and training;
- Carry out health surveillance where there is a risk to health

### ***How do I control the risks from noise?***

The purpose of the Noise Regulations 2005 is to make sure that people do not suffer damage to their hearing - so controlling noise risks and noise exposure should be where you concentrate your efforts.

Wherever there is noise at work you should be looking for alternative processes, equipment and/or working methods which would make the work quieter or mean people are exposed for shorter times. You should also be keeping up with what is good practice or the standard for noise control within your industry.

Where there are reasonably practicable things you can do to reduce risks from noise, that are reasonably practicable, they should be done. However, where noise exposures are below the lower exposure action values, risks are low and so you would only be expected to take actions that are relatively inexpensive and simple to carry out.

Where your assessment shows that your employees are likely to be exposed at or above the upper exposure action values, you must put in place a planned programme of noise control.

More information on Noise at Work Regulations is available at <http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk> or by calling 01458 253682 or Email [info@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:info@wilkinssafety.co.uk)

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## ***Video footage lands skip firm owner in court***

**The owner of a skip hire firm in Bacup has been fined after he was filmed putting an employee's life in danger by lifting him in a digger bucket.**

Christopher Jones was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after a concerned member of the public videoed the incident at Shadlock Skips on Newchurch Road on 1 May 2013

Burnley Magistrates' Court heard today (16 May 2014) that Mr Jones, 44 from Rossendale, and an employee had been trying to remove a small piece of damaged plywood above the main shutter doors.

No measures were put in place to prevent the worker falling around four metres from the bucket to the ground below.

The court was told much safer methods of carrying out the work were available on the site. These included attaching a man-riding cage to the front of the vehicle or simply using a ladder.

Mr Jones previously received a warning from HSE less than two months before the incident after the same employee was witnessed riding on top of a fully laden skip wagon as it reversed into the site.

Christopher Jones, of West View Road in Rossendale, was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay £1,039 in prosecution costs after pleading guilty to a breach of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 on 16 May 2014.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector David Myrtle said:

*"Falls from height are a major cause of workplace deaths in Great Britain. It's for this reason that HSE takes work at height seriously and expects employers, such as Mr Jones, to do the same."*

*"He knew that raising his employee in the bucket of the telehandler was wrong but thought that since the job would only take a minute it would be ok."*

*"That minute has cost Mr Jones dearly but had the employee fallen from the bucket then the cost to him and his family would have been immeasurable. It's never ok to put someone's life in danger – no matter how long it lasts."*

The video footage is available to watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALfTWdMkxWU> .

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## ***Drinks firm fined after young engineer's death at Llantrisant.....***

**An international smoothie and fruit juice company has been sentenced for safety failings after an engineer was killed by falling pipework during work to decommission a former factory in South Wales.**

Gavin Bedford, 24, was helping to dismantle and demolish a section of industrial pipework at the Gerber Juice Company Ltd premises in Llantrisant on 16 June 2010 when the structure, weighing around 300kg, collapsed and struck him.

The electro-mechanical engineer from Porthcawl, a well-known surfing and British trial-biking champion, sustained critical head injuries and died three days later in hospital.



Gerber Juice, now trading as Refresco Gerber UK Ltd, was prosecuted after a joint investigation between the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and South Wales Police discovered the company had failed to adequately plan and resource the decommissioning work.

Newport Crown Court heard today (16 May) that Gerber had closed their Llantrisant factory in 2010 and moved production to Bridgwater in Somerset. Mr Bedford was one of a small number of employees who had been temporarily kept-on to assist teams of specialist contractors in stripping the factory of its plant, machinery and services.

During the decommissioning, the factory had become a construction site with Gerber electing to plan, manage and monitor the project themselves instead of appointing a competent Principal Contractor.

As a consequence, Gerber had overlooked various hazardous tasks such as the removal of overhead industrial pipes and their supporting structures. This work consequently fell to the in-house engineers because they had not contracted the specialists to do it.

The court was told that Mr Bedford's work had not been adequately planned, risk assessed, communicated or monitored by management, and that the various safety systems that Gerber used to manage its specialist contractors had not been used to manage its own engineering staff on the same site.

The police and HSE investigation established that because no written plan was provided to the Gerber team explaining how the structure was to be taken apart, various bolts and structural elements were removed in an unsafe sequence. This is what led to the eventual collapse.

Mr Bedford could have been lying injured for up to 40 minutes before he was found trapped unconscious under the pipes.

The Court also heard that a production manager for the juice factory was in charge of the hazardous decommissioning project, despite never having done this work before or having received any formal training. Furthermore, a safety officer only visited once or twice a fortnight and was based in Somerset.

Refresco Gerber UK Ltd, registered at Hans Road in London but based at Express Park, Bridgwater, Somerset, was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £75,000 costs after pleading guilty to a breach of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work &c. Act 1974.

Speaking after sentencing, HSE inspector Liam Osborne, said:

*“Gavin Bedford, a young hard-working and highly-regarded engineer, was killed because of Gerber’s basic corporate failure to plan, manage and monitor a construction project. “Any demolition or dismantling work must be set down in writing and strictly monitored – as the law requires. It is also basic common sense.*

*“If Gerber had given enough time at the beginning to think through what needed to be done, and how it should be done, then Gavin would still be here today.”*

Nigel Bedford, Gavin’s father, commented:

*“This type of work was obviously dangerous and Gerber should have looked after Gavin properly. There was no planning for the job and the area wasn’t cordoned off. The management involved in the work didn’t have a clue what was going on.”*

Anna Bedford, Gavin’s mother, added:

*“I am left heartbroken. Gavin was a perfect son. He was a perfect friend. It was as if Gavin was put on this Earth to do such wonderful things; to help anybody that needed him. He touched everyone he knew and he had thousands of friends. I am so proud to have been Gavin’s mother. The world is a poorer place without him.”*

Information on health and safety legislation for employers is available on the HSE website at: <http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk/advice/index.html>



The HSE said the firm was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £75,000 costs,

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For further information about health and safety in your industry, please go to <http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk>

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If you have any queries on any health and safety matter, please contact Jon Wilkins on [01458 253682](tel:01458253682) or by email on [jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk)



Your Business is  
Safer in Our Hands