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All training centres above offer IPAF approved and audited courses for Operators of Mobile aerial work platforms, European directives require that all staff are fully and adequately trained in the safe use of the equipment they operate.

See www.ipaf.org for full listing

Bodged platform costs truck dealer £23,000+

Watts truck and van (Cardiff) was been fined £20,000 plus £3,070 costs for breaching height safety regulations after a 21 year old HGV mechanic fell from a makeshift platform attached to a forklift truck in August 2009.

The man was using the platform to repair a light on a high-sided vehicle at the Fairwood Truck Centre in Rogerstone, Newport. The platform, a wire surround screwed to a wooden pallet, had been put together by a colleague.

The injured man leant over to catch a bulb being thrown up to him by a co-worker, when the surround gave way and he fell, fracturing his hip. He needed an operation on his hip, was off work for a month, has since undergone numerous physiotherapy sessions and suffers continuous pain in his hip. The HSE investigation found that Watts failed to ensure that work at height by its employees was properly planned and supervised and carried out safely.



The home-made platform

The morale of this story is typical. The company could have purchased two, or even three, state of the art aerial work platforms for the pure monetary cost of this accident, not to mention the damage to morale and reputation.

Telehandler accident costs partner £9,000

John Handley, a partner in J&C Handley, was fined £5,000 plus £4,000 costs following an accident on a housing site in Carlton, Nottingham, in July 2009. A consignment of breeze blocks delivered to site was palletised, preventing the telehandler from lifting them in the normal way. When the blocks needed to be moved, Handley used a telehandler with hydraulic grab attachment, but this meant the blocks swayed as they were being transported.

He then asked sub-contractor David Cotterill to walk alongside and steady the load with his hands. Unfortunately Cotterill, 31, of Gedling, slipped and fell under the telehandler's front wheel. He broke his right foot, ankle and eg and has been off work ever since. Due to the nature of his injuries he will not be able to work in construction again and is retraining for an alternative career. His injuries also forced him to move from his three-storey house to one with fewer stairs.

HSE Inspector Lee Greatorex said: "In an ideal world the breeze blocks should have been delivered to their intended destination on the site but this wasn't possible. Therefore Mr Handley should have properly planned the work and made sure the delivery arrived in the right format for the forks of a telehandler. When this didn't happen, a rope should have been attached to enable Mr Cotterill to steady the load at a safe distance. Had Mr Handley taken the time to think through a safe system of work then a man may not have suffered such serious injuries."

The unit in Warrington – with the skylights

Three times unlucky

The landlord of a commercial building, Bizspace Investments Ltd of Finchley, London, has been fined £5,000 plus £9,000 costs after three men fell through skylights at the same industrial unit in Warrington, UK, on three separate occasions – leaving one of them paralysed.

The saga began when a Bizspace caretaker fell through a skylight while cleaning guttering on 20th March 2007. The man suffered multiple rib fractures and severe bruising. Another employee was sent to take photographs of the scene and fell through a different skylight, landing feet-first on a mezzanine floor and escaping injury.

Three weeks later a 62-year-old man employed by Anthony Massey, trading as Massey Roofing and Building Contractors of Bury, was sent to repair the skylights. While fixing them, he fell more than four metres to the ground, sustaining severe spinal injuries, leading to him being paralysed from the waist down.

The two were prosecuted by HSE for putting workers' lives at risk. Bizspace was fined £5,000 plus costs of £9,000, while Massey, 67, has been declared bankrupt and was not fined, but received a 12 month conditional discharge.

Martin Heywood, the investigating inspector at the HSE, said: "It is astonishing that virtually the same incident was allowed to happen on three separate occasions. A man was sent onto a roof without safety equipment, despite two caretakers falling through skylights less than a month earlier. As a result, the worker is likely to need to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life. If the project had been properly planned, using appropriate equipment for work at height, then all three workers would have remained uninjured."

Who trained him then?

Spotted in December in Amsterdam a window cleaner working on a third storey ledge around seven metres up.

