

# Ill-health failings in the spotlight in 2019

Every year, thousands of people have their lives affected by work-related ill health.

These incidents not only impact individuals physically and mentally, but also impact the families involved, as well as the reputation of businesses. Companies have previously adopted a 'tick box' approach to health and safety management, rather than proactively improving health and safety standards in the workplace.

As the HSE place an intense focus on tackling work-related ill health, in 2019 alone we have seen an increasing number of examples of organisations being prosecuted for failing to protect their staff against the dangers of ill-health. Here are some of the latest examples:

## Case study 1

### Setting the scene

Two companies were fined after a floor layer was fatally exposed to a toxic hazardous substance. The companies had not implemented any systems or procedures to adequately control the risks to its employees working in an enclosed space with a substance hazardous to health.

### The reality

A tragic accident that is easily avoidable has left devastating effects. Companies must take responsibility for their legal duties, (whether to its employees or its customers) and have effective systems and procedures in place to ensure that those duties are fulfilled.

### The impact

Both companies pleaded guilty to a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and were fined £750,000 collectively and ordered to pay £67,000 in costs.

## Case study 2

### Setting the scene

A playground installation and landscaping company was fined after their employees were exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica. Adequate control measures to prevent exposure were not put in place.

### The reality

Exposure to respirable crystalline silica can cause life-threatening diseases including silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which can lead to impaired lung function, lung cancer and death. This incident could have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.

### The impact

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 the company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,000.

## Case study 3

### Setting the scene

A construction company was fined after a worker was found unconscious after suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. The worker was cutting a drain into the factory floor using a petrol driven floor saw within an enclosed space.

### The reality

The work carried out had not been appropriately planned to support working within a confined space. Additionally, unsafe work at height had also taken place beforehand. This incident could have easily been avoided by carrying out the correct control measures and safe working practices.

### The impact

Under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 the company has been fined £15,000 and ordered to pay £1805 in costs.

Source [press.hse.gov.uk](https://press.hse.gov.uk). Accessed 25.07.2019