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Operative killed at 17 on scaffolding work

The court heard how the work on birdcage scaffolding failed to comply with the industry standard SG4, in terms of its actual construction –no intermediate transoms, inadequate boarding, lack of guard rails and ladders-; the makeup of the gang of workers was inadequate as far as competence and supervision of the operative who was only 17, and other inadequacies relating to provision, use and inspection of fall arrest equipment – harnesses. Despite a HSE Prohibition Notice on 16th January 2004, two weeks before the operative’s death, making it clear what had to be done to ensure safety by compliance with industry standard SG4, almost nothing was done to rectify the appalling catalogue of errors.

Sentencing will be on 4th and 5th of February 2008, over 4 years after he was killed.

Hilda Palmer spokesperson for FACK (Families against Corporate Killing) says: “This should send a clear message to all scaffolding companies- put your houses in order and ensure you comply with all industry standards, health and safety law and guidance, do not put any workers, let alone young workers, at risk of death or injury by taking short cuts. To all scaffolders I would say, check on the company’s health and safety risk assessment and Method Statement covering the safe system of work, ask questions, especially if you are asked to go against your training, or do things that you feel are unsafe. It’s far better to be safe than sorry.”

Background

A 17 year old trainee scaffolder, was working on the 30th January 2004 when he fell 10 to 16 metres from scaffolding inside an empty sewage digester tank being refurbished at a treatment Plant. He sustained serious head and abdominal injuries from which he later died in Wythenshawe hospital. The HSE Inspector gave evidence at Steven’s inquest on the substandard methods of scaffold construction, lack of safety measures, inadequate supervision and emergency procedures. This led to the operative being engaged in an unnecessary and unsafe procedure during which he fell.

On the day of the incident, XXXXX was in a four man team completing the construction of birdcage scaffolding inside an empty 20 metre high digester tank so that work on the underside of the domed roof could be carried out by another company.