

Cheshire car parts maker fined over crane injuries

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A Cheshire motor component manufacturer has been sentenced after a worker was injured when a 31-tonne load was dropped from an overhead crane.

Mitras Automotive (UK) Ltd was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the incident at its factory on the Winsford Industrial Estate in Winsford on 21 May 2009.



The load which fell from the crane, crushing Mr Burrell's leg

Chester Crown Court heard that Andrew Burrell and two other employees were working the night shift when chains on the overhead crane gave way. Part of the crane was pulled from roof mountings and fell nearly five metres to the ground. The crane's hook landed on Mr Burrell's left leg, shattering his thigh bone.

The 43-year-old from Winsford had to have a metal rod inserted in his leg as a result of his injuries. His two colleagues escaped unharmed.

The subsequent HSE investigation found the chains were only designed to lift a maximum of 17 tonnes - just over half the weight of the load - and the crane itself was only capable of lifting a 27-tonne load.

Mitras Automotive (UK) Ltd admitted failing to ensure the lifting capacity of the chains was clearly marked, and failing to look after the safety of its workers. The company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £8,792 in prosecution costs on 31 March.

Martin Paren, the investigating inspector at HSE, said:

"A worker has been badly injured as a result of this completely avoidable incident, but the consequences could easily have been catastrophic. It's incredible no one was killed.

"Mitras regularly expected its workers to lift loads well over the lifting capacities of both the chains and the overhead crane. It was only a matter of time before something went wrong, which is why Mitras Automotive was in court today.

"Lifting capacities exist for a reason and it's vital that manufacturers who use overhead cranes make sure employees aren't put at risk from falling loads."

Mitras Automotive (UK) Ltd was charged with breaching Regulation 7(a) of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998, and Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

A total of 25 workers were killed and more than 4,000 suffered major injuries in the manufacturing industry in Great Britain last year. Information on preventing injuries is available at www.hse.gov.uk/manufacturing