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Tata Steel Fined £1.4m after Health and Safety Failings Lead to Death of Worker

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Hull Crown Court heard how, on 23 April 2010, Thomas Standerline, 26, an employee of Tata Steel, was examining a crane as part of his inspection duties as a maintenance electrician. Whilst carrying out this work, an overhead crane travelled over the cage he was in, trapping and then crushing him. Mr Standerline died instantly.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Tata Steel had failed to enforce its own safety procedures, despite having two previous incidents before Mr Standerline's death. The HSE investigation also found Tata Steel failed to put in place essential control measures which would have prevented the overhead crane that killed Mr Standerline from even being in operation.

Tata Steel UK Limited of Millbank, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 and Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £1.4 million with costs.

On the day of the accident Standerline was inspecting the semi-goliath's collector shoes, which ran along a live busbar to power it. The power for both the cranes was supplied this way and, though the electricity feed to the semi-goliath had been isolated, it had not been shut off for the overhead crane.

Standerline walked through a broken gate that should have been locked and climbed up a stepladder into the collector inspection cage, which was not fully enclosed and had only a waist-high railing. At the same time the Harsco employee began to move the overhead crane, which had not been fitted with flashing warning lights or stop-blocks. Its collector cage travelled over that of the semi-goliath, where Standerline was standing, and crushed him. Had the overhead crane been isolated, this would not have happened.

He HSE said that there had been two previous incidents in September 2008 and in February 2010 that shared features with the one that cost Standerline his life but the lessons from these accidents weren't properly learned and they should have acted as a warning that this could have happened.

Sentencing, His Honour Judge Richardson said: "A range of failings of the defendant were found in respect of the maintenance and safety procedures after the first incident and there appears to have been an absence of awareness of safety procedures in respect of the second

incident. These two incidents serve to illustrate that there was a potential problem in the slab yard in terms of safety by reference to (a) the need for isolation of power supply to the cranes when maintenance work was being undertaken so that the cranes could not move and thereby preventing crushing between the two and (b) ensuring everyone was familiar with safety procedures." He added that "Tata Steel has a far from exemplary health and safety record. It conducts many operations which are hazardous, but the volume of convictions of the defendant company reveals to me a situation of concern in relation to health and safety."

Tata Steel had previously been fined £1.9m in July 2016 after two workers were seriously injured in separate incidents at its Northamptonshire plant. This was later reduced to £1.5m. Last August Tata Steel was fined £930,000 after five plant workers were exposed to toxic and flammable vapour.

Tata took steps to remedy shortcomings at the slab yard after Thomas Standerline was killed. A roof was added to the semi-goliath collector cage, and both cages were redesigned so there was clearance when they passed each other. Tata provided refresher training for its maintenance staff, and communication between both companies' employees was improved.

This is an example of the new Fine Levels under the revised Sentencing Council Guidelines being applied to a major company that fails to implement, communicate and enforce its own safety procedures and had no fail safe design arrangements in place at the time.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer