Auto Transmission Repair Work Fatality File



CAR MECHANIC SUFFERS SEVERE BURNS

A car salvage firm was fined a total of £40,000 and ordered to pay £25,000 in costs after a car mechanic suffered severe burns when the inspection pit he was standing in burst into flames.

A recent case concerned the prosecution of a car salvage company for multiple health and safety and fire safety failings, following a joint investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) .

CCTV footage from the company shows an employee mechanic entering a workshop pit to remove fuel from a vehicle that was being dismantled. Seconds later he is seen running out as fire engulfs the pit. The company routinely removed engine and gear box oil, coolant and fuels from old vehicles in preparation for scrapping. It was common practice for mechanics to puncture the vehicles' fuel tanks and allow the fuel to drain into open containers in the pit. An electric drill was sometimes used to puncture the tanks.

The investigation found that the accident was most likely to have been caused by a spark from either the electric drill or extension igniting the volatile vapour produced by the fuel in the open container. The fire grew rapidly in the presence of petrol and other combustible materials and required a major response from the FRS to control it, together with the assistance of the local police force to ensure the safety of the people nearby. The mechanic sustained severe burns to his hands, legs and nose in the fire, and has not been able to return to work since the incident.