

SAFETY ALERT

'EYE didn't check the spindle speed'

Incident details



Visor was no guard against "bullet" force of flying disc

A welder lost the sight in one eye after being hit by a grinding disc at the Gateshead premises of metal components fabricating company, Weldex.

The city's magistrates heard that on 1 August 2007, Norman Fielding was repairing a weld on a metal tube by grinding out imperfections and then re-welding it. He had been using a grinder for close-up work that should have had a maximum-sized cutting disc of one inch, but no discs of the correct size had been available.

Instead, Weldex gave him a home-made adaptor that allowed him to attach a four-and-a-half-inch disc to the grinder. Although the maximum speed for the disc was supposed to be 10,000 rpm, the grinder was operating at 28,000 rpm, making it far more likely to rupture.

HSE inspector Martin Baillie, who investigated the incident and prosecuted it in court, told SHP that as soon as Mr Fielding started work, part of the disc shattered, flew up into his helmet, penetrated the visor and entered his left eye, in which he is now blind. "Any disc of that size should be guarded, and you can't expect a visor to offer protection, as the centrifugal forces engendered by the over-sized disc are far too great," the inspector remarked. "It was like firing a bullet into the visor."

Lessons learnt

Operatives must ensure the following points are checked prior to working with abrasive wheel and grinders

- **Always ensure you have the correct tool for the job. The spindle speed on the abrasive wheel must never be exceeded above the maximum RPM**
- **Operatives must be trained to use grinders with additional training required to mount abrasive wheels**
- **Always ensure you have the correct PPE. Check your MS/RA**

If further information is needed then please contact the Aberthaw SHE Department

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