

Site Operative Fatality – Struck by Moving Plant



What happened?

A young worker was tragically killed when he was run over by a reversing excavator whilst working on a construction site.

An inquest jury have found that 22 year old engineer James Rourke, was killed as a result of inadequate excavator controls and a lack of supervision.

Having left Birmingham University with a degree in Geology in September 2019, James immediately started work as a site engineer, as “he wanted to get his hands dirty doing soil sampling,” his mother Clare, 54, says.



“He wanted to learn the basics from a good company and that was what he thought he was doing at the time, and we were excited for him because it was what he wanted to do.”

The fatal accident occurred in November 2019. James had been tasked with setting up warning signs in a work area where an excavator and its operator was situated.

Accident Causation

The inquest from the accident found that;

- No supervision was provided for the works.
- The work area had not been segregated from other works.
- The excavator did not move under the control of a banksman and was not instructed to move from its position.

Corrective Actions

All work activities should be supervised by a competent person. The ratio of supervisors vs. workers should be based on the risk profile of the works. This is particularly important when ‘Vulnerable Workers’ are on construction sites

All work areas which pose a risk to those entering it, must be segregated and access to these work areas controlled.

All plant movements undertaken in areas where physical plant person segregation cannot be achieved, must be controlled by a competent banksman.



Lessons Learned

As an industry we must recognise and mitigate the significant person / plant interface risks which can be present within the Geotechnical and Geoenvironmental field works scope.

Those organising works involving mobile plant must ensure competent and adequate resources are allocated to safely execute the works.

Site operatives who are newly introduced to site operations or who are new to the industry must be provided with increased supervision to ensure they are adequately protected. Lack of awareness combined with lack of supervision could increase the likelihood of harm.

Further information can be found at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-60023163>