Working Alone Fatality File

Lone working – gamekeeper found dead following accident on an ATV

The 53-year old, who was employed as a temporary stand-in gamekeeper, sustained serious injuries to his pelvis when the quad bike he was driving overturned on a slope. However, his absence was not detected until 52 hours later, at which point a search was initiated. His body was found some 200 yards away from the scene of the accident, in a separate field.

He had no means of raising the alarm although there was a mobile phone signal and the normal gamekeeper (who was undergoing surgery) had been issued with a phone.

It appears the injured gamekeeper had attempted to reach a nearby farmhouse to seek help and had opened a farm gate in order to get there. The trustees were prosecuted because the injured gamekeeper clearly did not die immediately and if he had a means of communication then he would have had an opportunity to summon help.

The accident occurred in October 2004, but the case had been to the Court of Appeal on a point of law relating to the prosecution of a Trust and the case was not heard in court until March of this year. It was also the first time an agricultural concern had been prosecuted in respect of lone working.

The trustees admitted failing to provide a means of communication or carrying out a risk assessment for a lone worker to report in at the end of a shift.

Advice

Health and Safety Executive investigating officer Lawrence Murray said the decision sent out an important message. “Hopefully other employers will learn from this case and ensure all precautions are

taken to cope with the hazards that lone workers are exposed to” he said.

“They need a system in place for lone workers keeping in touch with people and also a means of communication to contact the emergency services if need be.”