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**Corporate manslaughter sentencing a ‘wake-up’ call for businesses**

If companies want to make sure they don’t find themselves in court under the tough new corporate manslaughter legislation, senior managers need to be absolutely certain that their health and safety systems are up to date and robust, Michael Slade, Managing Director of Bibby Consulting & Support, has warned.

Slade was speaking after Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings (CGH) became the first organisation to be convicted and sentenced under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 since it came into force.

The company, which was fined £385,000 and could now go into liquidation, was indicted following investigations into the death of an employee in 2008. The employee died when a trench in which he was checking soil quality collapsed. CGH had pleaded not guilty but prosecutors said the company’s system of work was dangerous and it had paid no attention to established industry guidance. The police said CGH had a “cavalier attitude” to health and safety and that it used “out-dated working methods”.

Key to the conviction was evidence that the employee’s death was directly linked to the way in which the company’s activities were managed and/or organised by its senior management. The court decided that this amounted to a gross breach of duty of care by the company.

Slade said: “It is now clear that under this new Act courts will treat corporate manslaughter much more seriously than a health and safety offence where death results. And clearly judges will not shy away from imposing so high a fine as to put an organisation out of business.”

He added: “Having the most stringent health and safety procedures in place was essential for any company before this case but now it is more important than ever.

“Health and safety compliance must be driven by senior management. They have to ensure their organisations have comprehensive, high-quality health and safety systems and procedures in place. These systems must provide full compliance, not only with health and safety law but also with all relevant guidance and best practice. And it is vital that they are fully implemented, frequently reviewed and robustly audited.”

Bibby Consulting & Support offers tailor-made support packages to enable senior management to comply with the very latest health and safety and employment law, Slade said, adding that “consistent and practical advice from qualified professionals could help prevent any organisation becoming the next Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings”.

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High res image to support this release: [click here](http://media.changeworkscom.co.uk/clients/changeworks/images/PR%20Photos/ext/1215/images/PR%20Photos/michael2_crop.jpg)

**Caption:** Michael Slade, managing director of Bibby Consulting & Support

# Editor’s Notes

### About Bibby Consulting & Support

Bibby Consulting & Support, formerly mhl support, has earned the reputation of being one of the UK’s leading providers of compliance management services. We enable employers and senior managers to attain and maintain compliance within the demanding, complex and constantly evolving fields of Employment Law, Health and Safety and Environmental legislation.

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