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Nuclear regulator prosecutes waste firm after injury leaves employee open to exposure

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Britain's biggest nuclear waste storage and reprocessing site is facing a potential multimillion-pound fine after an employee was exposed to dangerously high levels of radiation.

The nuclear regulator said its investigation had led it to prosecute Cumbria-based Sellafield Ltd, which handles the waste from the UK's nuclear power stations as well as spent fuel from Japan and the US.

It is the first time in five years that the Office for Nuclear Regulation has prosecuted the company.

Last time, Sellafield was [fined 700,000](#) for sending bags of radioactive waste to a landfill dump instead of a specialist facility.

Now, if the prosecution is successful, the firm is understood to be facing the prospect of a substantial fine, likely to be much larger because an individual was affected.

The fine would be proportionate to the scale of the business, which has a 2bn-a-year turnover.

The case relates to [an accident in February 2017](#), when a site employee was wounded while handling equipment, leaving him open to internal radiation exposure.

He was decontaminated afterwards, but an investigation found the individual may have been exposed to radiation up to three times the annual limit. **The regulator is taking the firm to court over offences under the Health and Safety at Work act.**

Both Sellafield and the ONR said they were unable to comment further for legal reasons.

The prosecution is due to begin at Workington magistrates court in Cumbria on 20 July.

Sellafield has been state-run since 2016, after [MPs raised concerns over how much it was costing taxpayers under private ownership](#).

The facility is in the process of a major transformation from a reprocessor of nuclear waste, where it turns spent fuel from power stations into uranium that can be used again, to solely focusing on storage.

The site's Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (Thorp) ceases operations in November this year, and will then be dismantled. Sellafield's Magnox reprocessing plant, which handles waste from Britain's early nuclear power stations, is scheduled to close in 2020.