

# \$160k penalty for Tennant Creek business and director over fire station electrocution

---

19 February 2021 | Media Releases

Tennant Creek electrical services company Ridem Pty Ltd (trading as Dexter Barnes Electrical) and company director Russell O'Donnell, have been handed a combined penalty of more than \$160,000 after pleading guilty to charges relating to the death of a fourth year apprentice electrician.

The sentence was handed down yesterday in the Alice Springs Local Court.

The 34-year-old apprentice was electrocuted on 25 February 2019, while working unsupervised with another electrical apprentice on the roof of the Tennant Creek Fire Station.

Ridem Pty Ltd was convicted and fined \$80,000 for failing to comply with its health and safety duties under **Section 19(1) (<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011#page=25&zoom=auto,88,233>)** of the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*.

The court also ordered the company to provide \$40,000 to NT WorkSafe as part of an enforceable undertaking to develop an electrical safety campaign.

Mr O'Donnell was convicted and fined \$40,000, and was ordered by the court to complete hazard identification and management training, as well as due diligence training.

This is the first time the Northern Territory courts have imposed an enforceable undertaking as part of a sentence.

The Northern Territory's Work Health and Safety Regulator Bill Esteves said this tragic incident could have been avoided if the company had properly implemented its safety management system, and had properly trained and supervised the apprentice. "Apprentices and young workers are among the most vulnerable workers in the workplace, and it is important they receive the appropriate level of supervision and training, especially in high risk industries such as electrical services."

"It is also important all businesses and organisations have a safety management system in place that is suitable for their business activity and industry," Mr Esteves said.

"NT WorkSafe Inspectors are encountering increasing instances of businesses with a safety management system that has not been implemented, or businesses that have purchased off-the-shelf systems which do not address risk and hazards faced by the business and its workers."

"Company directors should not think that they have met their work health and safety duties because they have purchased a system," Mr Esteves said.

"Directors must exercise due diligence and ensure the business complies with its WHS duties and obligations."

"In particular, Directors must ensure safe systems of work are in place, and are effective, and verify that all workers are inducted and sufficiently trained to use and comply with the system."

NT WorkSafe is committed to providing advice and up-to-date information on work health and safety to (WHS) duty holders. Businesses who are unclear about their (WHS) duties are encouraged to contact NT WorkSafe on 1800 019 115, or access the information on the NT WorkSafe website at [worksafe.nt.gov.au](https://worksafe.nt.gov.au).

**Note to Media:** The next-of-kin have requested privacy and that the worker's name not be used.

## Related documents

- **[Media release - Charges laid over the death of apprentice electrician in Tennant Creek.](https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/news-and-events/media-releases/2019/charges-laid-over-the-death-of-apprentice-electrician-in-tennant-creek2)**  
**(<https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/news-and-events/media-releases/2019/charges-laid-over-the-death-of-apprentice-electrician-in-tennant-creek2>)**

**Contact:** Peter Chan

**Phone:** 8999 5085

**Email:** [ntworksafe@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntworksafe@nt.gov.au)