

€35k for NCT employee fired for testing own car

A SENIOR National Car Test official who was sacked for testing his own car has been awarded €35,000 for unfair dismissal.

In 2013, the firm that operates the NCT contract, Applus Car Testing Ltd, fired Richard Godsland for testing his car in March 2012.

At a hearing earlier this year, Mr Godsland denied he was ever told that testing his own vehicle would result in his dismissal.

The Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) found Mr Godsland's action had the potential to embarrass Applus and to undermine its reputation if his action came to the attention of the external auditors.

Mr Godsland began employment as a vehicle inspector in June 2003. Applus told the hearing it is forbidden to test one's

By Gordon Deegan

own vehicle or vehicles of family members. On June 21, 2013, Applus's regional manager wrote to Mr Godsland inviting him to an investigative meeting on July 8 about his testing of his own car.

According to the EAT report: 'There was no explanation of how the matter came to his attention or why this action was being taken more than a year after the incident occurred.'

At the second meeting on July 29, 2013, Mr Godsland described as a lapse in judgment the behaviour deemed serious misconduct by the regional manager.

A disciplinary meeting was held on August 15, 2013, and Mr Godsland, who worked out of Applus's NCT centre at Portlaoise, was sus-

pending with pay pending a final decision. The regional manager wrote to Mr Godsland on August 16, 2013, saying his job would be terminated from September 27, 2013. Mr Godsland appealed the decision unsuccessfully.

The EAT determined Mr Godsland testing the car was contrary to the NCT integrity programme that states 'if you have any history pertaining to a vehicle presented to you for a test, you must disclose this to your TL/manager who will organise another inspector to test this vehicle'.

The EAT found the dismissal of Mr Godsland was unfair and taking account of Mr Godsland's contribution to his dismissal, the Tribunal awarded him €35,000.

A spokeswoman for Applus yesterday declined to comment.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Why autumn years are a gift to behold

AS I write, the rain is falling and it is noticeably cooler. The leaves are slowly turning yellow and the grass is not so eager to grow. We are entering autumn, that season of decay whose beauty reveals the splendour of old age.

We live at a time when old age is shunned, driven out of sight and out of mind. In a world that prizes youth as the acme of human life, the elderly are very often forgotten or left behind. It is a world in which physical perfection is the principal goal and where those in decline simply cannot compete.

We spend a fortune attempting to erase all sign of age, cleansing the body of its creases and striving to perpetuate adolescence. In so doing, we forget that there is a natural order to all things. We forget that we are no less a part of nature than the autumn trees.

The autumn tree: majestic, beautiful and a symbol that even the most rooted thing cannot escape the advance of time. It proudly stands before us, its ageing leaves glistening in the morning sun. Dignified, sturdy and stately, it seems to shine even in the face of death.

However much we endeavour to conceal it, we all experience the autumn of our lives. Eventually, our green leaves will turn yellow and glide gently to the ground. Eventually, the lustre of youth will give way to the placid pace of old age.

As always, nature guides us along the path of life. To resist time is like a tree clinging to its summer leaves. It is to spurn the beauty of age, the priceless benediction that is the autumn of existence.

To us, yellow leaves are not repellent. They brighten the horizon and compensate for the loss of light we experience at this time of year. In the evening, as the sun sinks below the skyline, they remain aglow like small lanterns dangling from the branches.

It is true that they signify age and decline, but that is not how we see them. They inspire wonder, joy and even love.

They are a source of profound consolation as the days shorten and the children return to school.

This is the melody of nature, a song that is both soothing and reassuring. It has inspired poets, philosophers and mystics, and constitutes the essence of the greatest works ever committed to canvas. It is a song that has charmed each and every generation, a melody that has lifted up the hearts of those for whom life was all but drained of meaning.

To behold the autumn trees, with their brilliant hues and graceful countenance, is to behold the best in a

world exhausted by expectation. By this I mean that we have come to expect too much of people. Instead of permitting people to grow old gracefully, many feel inferior when they physically falter or show even the slightest sign of age.

In the end, and however much we may deny it, we are beings that belong to nature. We may conceal the grey, iron away the wrinkles and decorate our bodies as though in the first flush of youth. In doing so, we simply erase the natural beauty which is the gift of age.

The elderly stand before us like the autumn tree. Those who have come to terms with the natural cycle do not boast physical perfection. They do not cling to their green leaves when autumn arrives.

Like the ageing oak, they radiate beauty from within. When we are down, they raise us up. When we are in darkness, they provide a healing light.

There is nothing imperfect about yellow leaves. They do render a tree inferior, but merely enhance its natural perfection. And it is towards them that we gaze as summer bids farewell.

Likewise, there is nothing imperfect in growing old. It is the summit of human life, the goal towards which we all must move and hopefully reach. It is a glorious phase in which the true beauty of a person shines through for all to savour.

ICALL it our 'yellow moment' - that time of life when, if we are lucky, we will glisten amid all the green. The rain is still falling and the day is still cold. Yet, as I stare out my window, I see them twinkling and shining. I see the yellow leaves smile and, somehow, the gloom subsides.

And that is how we should see each other as we reach the autumn of our lives. Each grey hair and wrinkle is not a sign of decline, but a mark of wisdom and character.

Each is a sign that we have lived, loved and survived in order to brighten up the world.

Why else do you think children explode with joy when they see their grandparents? With no standard of perfection except that of love, they recognise in their grandparents a source of light, knowledge and gentleness. They see radiance and beauty where the world sees only physical breakdown.

The yellow leaves root us to life in all its majesty. They show us why we should never resist growing old with grace.

For it is only when we surrender to the seasons of life, that we shall finally discover why human perfection is not a phase but a goal we reach only at the very end.

mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie

6.3 Million Children Died Last Year Before their 5th Birthday

The infographic shows the life of two children, Sarah (Sierra Leone) and Emma (Ireland), from birth to age 5. It features a central vertical timeline with circular markers for each year, and text boxes describing their experiences.

- Age 0:** Born in a mud hut (Sarah) / Born in a hospital (Emma)
- Age 1:** Dirty Water (Sarah) / Clean Water (Emma)
- Age 2:** Hunger Pains (Sarah) / Birthday Cake (Emma)
- Age 3:** Walks 8 Hours for Water (Sarah) / First day of playschool (Emma)
- Age 4:** Contracts Malaria (Sarah) / Catches a Cold (Emma)
- Age 5:** Falls asleep in Mum's arms... Dies (Sarah) / Falls asleep in Mum's arms... Wakes up feeling better (Emma)

There is something you can do
Sponsor a child today, visit worldvision.ie

