

Asbestos removal company fined for failing to protect workers from risk

An asbestos management company has been fined and two of its employees have been jailed for failing to protect workers from asbestos exposure during a major refurbishment project in Plymouth

Chelmsford Crown Court heard that in February 2017, concerns were raised by workers at Ensure Asbestos Management Limited who believed they were being put in danger whilst carrying out refurbishment work at the former department store.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found irregularities in the asbestos surveys and clearance certificates, with some of them found to be fraudulent.

Ensure Asbestos Management Limited had been contracted to carry out an asbestos survey, remove all identified asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) from the building and then carry out the initial strip-out of the building before it was refurbished. However, the company was found to have deliberately cut corners in managing the danger of asbestos exposure putting workers at risk.

Ensure Asbestos Management Limited of Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 was fined £100,000.

Director of Ensure Asbestos Management Billy Hopwood of Swanstead, Basildon, Essex pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He has been sentenced to 10 months in prison and has been disqualified from being a director for five years.

Contracts Manager at Ensure Asbestos Management Phillip Hopwood of Churchgate Street, Harlow, Essex pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1), 3(1) and 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He has sentenced to 15 months in prison and disqualified from being a director for 10 years.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Georgina Symons said: "Ensure Asbestos Management Limited – a previously licensed asbestos removal contractor – failed to work within the law despite having a wealth of knowledge on the risks associated with exposure to asbestos and the necessary training to have done so safely. They deliberately falsified documents and cut corners.

"Workers should be supported by their employers when they raise health or safety concern. This case sends a clear message that those responsible will be held to account for their failings.

"The dangers associated with asbestos are well known and a wealth of advice and guidance is freely available from HSE and other organisations."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/ ^[2]

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