

Building contractor jailed after house collapse in Brighton

A building contractor has been sentenced following an incident in February 2015 in which a house in Brighton partially collapsed.

Hove Crown Court heard how builder Glen Peters (trading as Brow Builders) undermined the structural integrity of the house by digging out the basement. He then failed to act on the advice of a structural engineer on how to remedy the situation, resulting in the gable wall partially collapsing and the ground floor collapsing into the basement. Adjacent properties had to be evacuated and the area cordoned off because there were concerns that members of the public living nearby and passing through the area were at risk.

An investigation carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the property had bungeroosh walls, common to buildings in the Brighton area which were built in the mid-18th to 19th century. They are constructed with a mixture of rubble, timber, pebbles, stones and flint in a lime mix mortar set between shuttering. The make-up of these walls makes working on this type of building more challenging in terms of structural stability, meaning that those doing so must fully understand what they are dealing with.

The investigation also found that Glen Peters failed to report the incident to HSE as a dangerous occurrence in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013.

Glen Peters (trading as Brow Builders) of Woodingdean, Brighton, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 25(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and Regulation 7 of the RIDDOR Regulations 2013. The defendant was sentenced to five months imprisonment for count one and two months imprisonment for count two to run concurrently. He was also ordered to pay costs of £7,000.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said "Basement work must be properly planned to ensure the structural integrity of the building throughout the construction work. When this type of work is done badly, workers and members of public are at significant risk of serious injury or death. In addition, we cannot underestimate the impact on the homeowners when their properties are extensively damaged."

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. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

www.legislation.gov.uk/

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.