

Company and director sentenced after children were taken ill during diving lesson

A health and safety inspector has paid tribute to emergency responders who came to the aid of several children who were taken ill during a SCUBA diving training session.

Aqua Logistics Limited and their sole director Geoffrey Gordon Shearn were today sentenced for their failings after twelve pupils from Manchester Grammar School breathed contaminated compressed air during a pool training session.

Wigan and Leigh Courthouse heard that on 26 June 2017, the school pupils became unwell during an on-site scuba diving course in the school swimming pool. Twelve pupils were taken to hospital with suspected carbon monoxide poisoning. One 14-year-old boy was put into an induced coma and another pupil was also in a serious condition.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) along with Greater Manchester Police, found the dive training staff had obtained refills to SCUBA cylinders supplied by Aqua Logistics Limited. Aqua Logistics Limited and the sole director Mr Shearn had not correctly installed and maintained the high-pressure compressor system. A fire in the filtration system resulted in contaminated air being supplied to YU Diving who were teaching the school children basic SCUBA diving skills.

Aqua Logistics Limited of Enterprise Centre Two, Chester Street, Stockport pleaded guilty to breaching section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £9,300 fine and ordered to pay £11,000 costs.

Sole director Geoffrey Gordon Shearn of Chester Road in Stockport pleaded guilty to breaching section 37 of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was given a 12 month community order with requirement for 100 hours unpaid work and ordered to pay £5,000 costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE specialist diving inspector Richard Martins said: "This case highlights the importance of ensuring that compressed breathing air sold to the public is safe. The quality of the air supplied is essential to the preservation of life.

"Suppliers of breathing air to the diving community and public should ensure that they use correctly installed and maintained equipment accompanied by regular testing of the air supplied. Further tragedy was narrowly averted through the quick response of the school staff, diving instructors, and the Manchester emergency services."

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>
4. Further information regarding health and safety guidance for diving, visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk/diving/>

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