

Company director fined after falsifying documents

A company director has been fined £5,000 after he falsified asbestos removal documents while his firm worked on a block of flats in Brighton.

Reliable Insulations and Fibre Control Ltd had been hired to remove asbestos at Abbotts Apartments, on King Street, when the company's director, James Pett, created a fraudulent document claiming a 4-Stage Clearance had been completed on 26 September 2021.

A 4-Stage Clearance is required by law to ensure asbestos removal work has been completed safely.

With the asbestos removal work at the site running behind schedule, Mr Pett decided against using an independent company to check the work had been carried out safely, that the site had been properly cleaned, and it was safe to reoccupy.

Instead, he decided to falsify the 4-Stage Clearance certificate.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that 72-year-old Mr Pett had used a previous authentic test certificate to create a fraudulent document to deceive other parties into believing that the 4-Stage Clearance had been completed, allowing further maintenance work to continue in the basement.

HSE has recently updated its webpages on [asbestos safety](#) and in 2023 launched an awareness campaign, [Asbestos and You](#), which provides tradespeople with information about how to deal with asbestos on a job, and the personal risks from asbestos that still exist across the country today. The workplace regulator has also just launched its [Asbestos: Your Duty](#) campaign that aims to improve understanding of what the legal duty to manage asbestos involves.

James Pett, of Avenue Road, Erith, Kent, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. He was fined £5,000 at Bromley Magistrates' Court on 18 January 2024.

HSE inspector Russell Beckett said: "This was a reckless act by the director of a company whose sole job was to safely remove asbestos. Instead, he decided to deceive to try and speed up a job.

"Companies who are licensed to remove asbestos by the HSE are fully aware of risks associated with asbestos and the need to follow all precautions necessary to make sure areas where asbestos has been removed are safe for reoccupation, and this includes a 4-stage clearance test by an independent company.

"Exposure to asbestos is responsible for over 5000 deaths every year in the UK.

“This prosecution shows that HSE will not hesitate to take action against individuals who do not do all that they should to keep people safe.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Rebecca Schwartz and supported by HSE paralegal officer Stephen Parkinson.

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.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.