

Company fined after hospital staff left with life-changing conditions

A company in York has been fined more than £16,000 after staff at a hospital were left with life-changing medical conditions after being exposed to ionised hydrogen peroxide.

Workers at Bio Decontamination Limited attended Scarborough Hospital on 18 September 2019 after being hired to carry out the decontamination of the Aspen ward.

The company used ionised hydrogen peroxide to decontaminate the rooms in the ward. They failed to appropriately seal the rooms, meaning the ionised hydrogen peroxide escaped into the adjacent corridor where hospital staff were working.

It is a legal requirement to adequately control exposure to materials that cause ill health. How people can get exposed must be carefully considered. [Guidance is available about what you need to do.](#)

Three members of hospital staff required treatment at the Accident and Emergency department after being exposed to the substance. They suffered from itchy skin and became lightheaded. All three continue to suffer with life changing medical conditions as a result of their exposure and struggle to carry out day to day tasks or work

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the work had not been properly risk assessed prior to being undertaken. The employees carrying out the work were not appropriately trained nor supervised and the working practices displayed was below the required standard. The level of ionised hydrogen peroxide was not adequately monitored to warn of release, exposing people to dangerous levels.

Bio Decontamination Limited, of Micklegate, York, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Section 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The company was fined £16,775 and ordered to pay £27,228 in costs at York Magistrates' Court on 5 July 2023.

HSE inspector Darian Dundas said: "This case recognises the dangers of not carrying out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and not appropriately training and supervising staff members.

"These failures left three members of staff so ill they couldn't return to work.

"It could so easily have been avoided by simply implementing the correct control measures and safe working practices."

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.