

Company fined for putting worker at risk

A company in Berkshire has been fined £16,000 after putting an employee at risk of exposure to ionising radiation.

A worker at Gemini Technology (Reading) Limited was put at risk of exposure to 500 milliSieverts (mSv) per hour while working on an irradiator at a calibration facility operated by the Ministry of Defence on 7 September 2018.

In the UK, the average person is exposed to a dose of 2.7 mSv every year. Doses over 100 mSv can lead to a change in red blood cells. Even small doses of radiation can lead to an increased risk of developing cancer longer term.

Gemini Technology was called to the MOD site on Crescent Road, Gosport, to fix a problem with the irradiator it was the service agent for. A high activity Caesium-137 source had become stuck in an unshielded position within the irradiator during an incident on 6 September 2018.

The remediation work undertaken by the Gemini Technology employee the following day involved removing the top of the machine's shielded housing, raising the radioactive source and manually rotating a carousel which contained a number of radioactive sources.

This put the Gemini Technology employee at risk of exposure to dose rates of up to 500 mSv per hour.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Gemini Technology had been working with ionising radiation for a number of years and is a recognised brand within its industry. However, the firm had not formally consulted a suitable radiation protection adviser, as required under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017. The company had not undertaken suitable and sufficient risk assessments of the work it was carrying out, and subsequently it had not identified and implemented appropriate control measures to manage the risk of exposure to ionising radiation, potentially putting employees at risk.

HSE guidance can be found at: [Health and Safety: Ionising Radiation \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/ionising-radiation/)

Gemini Technology (Reading) Limited, of Wellington Industrial Estate, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Regulation 9(1) of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017. The company was fined £16,000 and ordered to pay £25,000 towards costs at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court on 15 September 2023.

HSE specialist inspector of radiation Karen Fuller said: "The Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017 exist to protect those at work from ionising radiation and other people who could be affected by this type of work.

“All companies working with ionising radiation must properly assess the risks to their employees, and others, to ensure that they take all steps necessary to restrict exposure. It is essential that they consult a competent radiation protection adviser to facilitate this. Only then can they be confident that any exposure to ionising radiation is kept as low as reasonably practicable.

“This situation could so easily have been avoided by properly considering the risks involved, identifying the required control measures, and ensuring safe working practices were put in place. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement actions against those that fall below the required standards.”

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We seek to 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>