

Construction firm fined after workers exposed to asbestos

A construction company has been fined after workers were exposed to asbestos whilst refurbishing a flat in St John's Wood, Westminster.

Westminster Magistrates' Court heard that between 14 May and 31 August 2018, ASAI Construction Ltd, the Principal Contractor for the project, failed to obtain a Refurbishment and Demolition asbestos survey prior to commencing work on site. During the project ASAI Construction Ltd was made aware by a subcontractor that there was asbestos containing material (ACM) within the flat, however the company allowed work to continue and failed to ensure that the ACMs were removed safely. As a result, several people were exposed to asbestos fibres over a prolonged period.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that ASAI Construction Ltd failed to take reasonably practicable steps to prevent the people working on site being exposed to asbestos.

ASAI Construction Ltd of Harrowdene Road, Wembley pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,837.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Owen Rowley said: "There are currently more than 5,000 asbestos-related deaths each year in the UK. Any asbestos on site should be identified before refurbishment or demolition work takes place and suitable steps must be taken to control the risk of exposure.

"In this case ASAI Construction Ltd's failure to manage the risk of exposure to asbestos was compounded by their lack of response when concerns were raised regarding its presence on site.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

Note 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. More information regarding asbestos health and safety can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/>

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