

Eddie Stobart fined after workers exposed to asbestos

Logistics company Eddie Stobart has been fined after work at one of its sites exposed staff to asbestos.

The firm was fined £133,000 for a series of failures that took place while excavation work was carried out at its rail and container freight port in Widnes.

Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) were disturbed by the building work, putting staff at risk.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found an asbestos survey had not been carried out, the workers involved hadn't received any training in relation to asbestos, and Eddie Stobart failed to report the incident correctly.

Manchester Magistrates Court heard that in early 2018, an area of the company's Mersey Multimodal Gateway in Widnes was earmarked for the storage of empty containers. As the ground had become damaged by heavy lift loaders used to move containers, it was decided to scrape away the top layer to reach an older, more level surface below.

This work took place over several months and subsequently the remnants of old buildings containing asbestos were present in the surface material. Underground basement cavities were also found and excavated and then backfilled with rubble. Several workers complained about the dust created by these processes and what it may contain.

An investigation by HSE found an asbestos survey had not been carried prior to the work beginning to determine if any of the excavated material contained asbestos.

A risk assessment had not been carried out nor suitable control measures put in place to prevent or reduce exposure to asbestos or prevent the spread of asbestos containing materials from the site. The workers involved in the excavation work hadn't received any training in relation to asbestos.

It was several months after the work had been completed that testing was carried out and the subsequent survey identified ACMs in the mounds of spoil, as well as scattered around the footprint where the work had taken place.

The company then failed to report the incident under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) within the 10-day timeframe required.

Eddie Stobart Ltd, of Stretton Green Distribution Park, Langford Way, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 5 of The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and Regulation 11(1) of The Control

of Asbestos Regulations 2012. The company was fined £133,000 and ordered to pay costs of £9,260 on 4 November 2022.

Following the hearing, HSE Inspector Stuart Wood said: "Asbestos was historically used in countless applications and can be found in a variety of places.

"The law requires businesses undertaking work in demolition, maintenance or any other work which exposes or is liable to expose employees to asbestos to assume ACMs are present unless you have evidence, such as an asbestos survey to indicate otherwise.

"The duty to manage asbestos relates to entire premises including yard areas, not just buildings. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos."

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: [HSE: Asbestos – health and safety in the workplace](#)
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>