

Housing association fined after exposing employees to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

A community housing association has today been sentenced after it failed to effectively manage its employees' exposure to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) over a prolonged period of time.

Newport Magistrates' Court heard how, between July 2010 and May 2015, employees of Tai Calon Community Housing Limited were routinely exposed to vibration in their day to day work. Following the company's introduction of health surveillance in May 2015, a number of employees were diagnosed with HAVS which has side effects such as pain and loss of strength in the hands and has been known to cause distress and sleep disturbance.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Tai Calon failed to adequately assess the risk to employees from the use of vibratory tools, failed to implement adequate measures to reduce employees' exposure to vibration, failed to place employees under suitable health surveillance and failed to provide employees with suitable information, instruction, and training.

Tai Calon Community Housing of The Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, was found guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 and was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £2789.25 in costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Paul Newton commented: "No one's health should not be made worse by the work they do. In this case, if Tai Calon had understood why health surveillance was necessary, it would have ensured that it had the right systems in place to monitor its workers' health.

"This prosecution highlights the health risks from using vibratory tools and the importance of employers having a health surveillance programme in place. Where vibratory tools are used, employers should monitor the health of employees using them and ensure appropriate systems are in place to manage and control the risk from vibration."

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. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.