

North West property developer sentenced after building collapse

A Manchester-based property developer has today been sentenced after the roof and part of the rear wall collapsed at one of his properties during demolition works.

Manchester Crown Court heard how Riaz Ahmad appointed a group of workers, who had no experience in construction, to carry out demolition work at a property in Oldham. On 11 August 2017, after receiving a call from Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council's building control department, a HSE inspector visited the site and found almost all the internal walls and supports of the roof had been taken out. A Prohibition Notice was served preventing any further work and a major road running past the building was closed.

A day later, it was agreed that there was no safe way of accessing the building and Oldham MBC obtained an order to demolish the building. It was soon after this that the roof and wall collapsed. This triggered an emergency response involving Greater Manchester Police and the Fire Service, during which properties were evacuated and the area cordoned off. Oldham Borough Council arranged for an emergency demolition of the remainder of building to take place later that day. Local businesses faced significant disruption as the site was made safe.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found the collapse could have been prevented had a principal contractor been appointed and a suitable risk assessment been carried out. These steps could have ensured the stability of the building during the demolition with regards to temporary works and control measures such as scaffolding. Mr Ahmad did not suitably plan the work as he employed unskilled workers, neglected the risks from working at height and stability of the building, failed to provide them with basic welfare facilities and did not consider several health hazards.

Riaz Ahmad, of Dickenson Road, Manchester, was found guilty of breaching Section 2 (1) and Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 19 (1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. He was sentenced to eight months imprisonment for each offence (to run concurrently) and was order to pay prosecution costs of £65,000.

In his sentencing of Mr Ahmad, the Judge remarked that:

'This was a very serious case indeed. It was nothing short of a miracle that only one person was injured. A clear statement has to be made to those who undertake significant projects such as this, namely that health and safety legislation has to be adhered to for good reason, and those who ignore its basic tenets will receive punishment.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector David Argument said: "The incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control

measures and safe working practices.

“Duty holders should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action 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 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>