

Offenders in three cases of illegal asbestos removal fined

A contractor and a person-in-charge of works as well as two residential unit owners were respectively convicted at Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (June 1) and at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts on May 21 of contravening the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) by illegally demolishing asbestos-containing materials. They were fined a total of \$27,000.

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said that the department conducted proactive inspections as well as followed up on reports from members of the public in August and November last year. During the operations, the EPD found the illegal demolition of corrugated asbestos cement sheet roofing at premises at Kowloon Tong Court in Kowloon Tong, at Wah Fat Building in Kwun Tong and at Tai Kut House in Quarry Bay. After collecting evidence, the EPD confirmed that, in the above-mentioned cases, no written notice was given to the EPD at least 28 days in advance of the commencement of the relevant works in accordance with the law. In one of the cases, no registered asbestos contractor (RAC) was hired to carry out the relevant works. The EPD then, under the APCO, initiated prosecutions against the works contractor, namely Stone Engineering Company Limited, the person-in-charge and the residential unit owners involved in the cases.

The spokesman reminded persons-in-charge or contractors of works and property owners that the EPD would follow up seriously on every suspected case of illegal removal of asbestos-containing materials. Renovations and refurbishments at buildings involving the demolition of asbestos-containing materials must be carried out by RACs in accordance with the law and the requirements of the code of practice on asbestos control to avoid the release of asbestos fibres and to protect the health of members of the public and workers. Offenders may be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. Meanwhile, contractors who carry out works involving the demolition of asbestos must give not less than 28 days' written notice to the EPD prior to the commencement of such works. Otherwise, they may be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000.

Members of the public can help combat illegal activities and safeguard public health by calling the EPD departmental hotline at 2838 3111 to make a report if they witness any illegal works involving asbestos.