

Residential unit agent and renovation contractor convicted of illegal asbestos demolition works

A residential unit agent, who did not comply with the requirements of an asbestos abatement notice (AAN) to hire a registered asbestos contractor to carry out asbestos demolition works, and a renovation contractor involved in the same case, who failed to notify the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) prior to the commencement of the demolition works, were convicted for contravening the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (March 28). The two persons were fined a total of \$5,000.

An EPD spokesman said a complaint was received from a member of the public in August 2018 that the demolition of an asbestos roof of a unit in Shui Ning House, 50 Shui Ning Street, Kwun Tong, was suspected of being carried out without segregation, expressing concern that the release of asbestos fibres may affect the health of residents nearby. EPD staff confirmed that asbestos demolition works were being conducted without giving not less than 28 days' written notice to the EPD prior to the commencement of the works in accordance with section 73 (1) of the APCO. In addition to ordering to suspend the works with immediate effect and segregate the place, the EPD also issued an AAN to the residential unit agent, ordering the agent to hire a registered asbestos contractor and complete demolishing and handling the asbestos materials by a deadline. EPD staff found that the residential unit agent still did not comply with the requirements of the AAN in a follow-up inspection. The EPD instigated prosecutions against the residential unit agent and the renovation contractor under the APCO after gathering evidence.

The EPD spokesman reminded residential unit owners and agents that refurbishment and renovation at buildings containing asbestos must be carried out by registered asbestos contractors in accordance with the statutory requirements and the code of practice on asbestos control. Contractors to carry out works involving asbestos must give not less than 28 days' written notice to the EPD prior to the commencement of such works. Otherwise, they are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000. The EPD spokesman reiterated that members of the public must comply with the requirements of an AAN issued by the EPD and hire registered professionals to complete the demolishing and handling of asbestos-containing materials. Otherwise, they may commit an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

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