

Three cases of illegal removal of asbestos fined

A works company and a person-in-charge of works were convicted at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (May 30) for contravening the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) for the illegal demolition of corrugated asbestos cement sheet (CACS) roofing. In addition, the owner of a residential unit was convicted at the same court for contravening the APCO by failing to comply with the requirements of an asbestos abatement notice (AAN). They were fined a total of \$11,000.

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said the department conducted proactive inspections as well as following up on reports from members of the public in October and November last year and found the illegal demolition of CACS roofing at three premises at Shui Ning House, Kwun Tong, on Nanking Street, Yau Ma Tei, and on Junction Road, Kowloon City. After investigation, the EPD confirmed that, among the above-mentioned cases, in two of them no written notice was given to the EPD at least 28 days in advance of the commencement of the works in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements. In one of the cases, no registered asbestos contractor (RAC) was hired to carry out the demolition. Moreover, one residential unit owner concerned failed to hire a RAC to conduct asbestos abatement works by a deadline in accordance with the requirements of an AAN issued by the EPD. The EPD, under the APCO, initiated prosecutions against the person-in-charge, the residential unit owner and the works company involved in the case, namely Tin Kee Engineering Limited.

The spokesman reminded works companies and persons-in-charge of works that the EPD would follow up seriously on every suspected case of illegal removal of asbestos materials. Renovation and refurbishment at buildings involving the demolition of asbestos-containing materials must be carried out by registered asbestos contractors in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements and the code of practice on asbestos control. Contractors who 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. In addition, works companies and building owners must strictly comply with the requirements of an AAN issued by the EPD and hire registered professionals to complete the demolition and handling of asbestos-containing materials by a deadline. 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 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.