

Two people sentenced after failing to control the risk of Legionella bacteria

Two people have been sentenced after failing to control the risk of exposure to Legionella bacteria in the cooling tower at their business premises in Spring Hill, Birmingham.

Birmingham Magistrates' Court heard that, between June 2017 and February 2018, Kulwant Singh Chatha and partner Satpaul Kaur Chatha of Isher Hangers failed to put suitable measures in place to control the risk of Legionella bacteria from the cooling tower on their premises. Concerns raised by their own water treatment consultants were ignored, and no Legionella risk assessments were in place.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the cooling tower was not being managed to control the risk from Legionella bacteria. This failure exposed employees of Isher Hangers, as well as members of the public, to Legionellosis – a collective term for diseases caused by the bacteria including Legionnaires' disease, which can be fatal. People who have underlying or current medical issues are especially susceptible to infection, which was a particular concern as Isher Hangers' premises are in the vicinity of two major hospitals.

Kulwant Singh Chatha and Satpaul Kaur Chatha pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and were each sentenced to serve 12 weeks in prison, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to pay costs of £12,115 each, including a victim surcharge of £115.

Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Karen Sweeney said, 'Isher Hangers were operating a cooling tower without biocide, ignoring the advice of their own consultants. Cooling towers have the potential to spread bacteria that can cause serious illness or death, if not maintained in accordance with the published guidelines.'

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. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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