

NEWSFLASH



RGWILBREY (CONSULTANTS) LIMITED

Company fined for asbestos failings

A company has been fined for failing to carry out proper risk assessments for the presence of asbestos before a major office refurbishment in Merthyr Tydfil.

Employees and contractors were put at risk when work started on the refurbishment without an asbestos survey.

Waxport Ltd of Mottingham Road, Edmonton, London pleaded guilty to breaches of Regulation 4(8) and 4(9) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 at Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates' Court yesterday. They were fined £1,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,416.43.

The company, which owned Oldway House, an office block in the centre of Merthyr Tydfil, had previously been issued with advice from a licensed asbestos contractor advising them complete an asbestos survey before carrying out major refurbishment work in the building in April 2007.

Waxport Ltd commissioned another company to carry out the refurbishment work, and advised them that asbestos was no longer present or had been encapsulated in the building. As a result, work commenced and asbestos was disturbed with work only stopping when a site worker identified the substance.

HSE Inspector, Dean Baker, said:

"The dangers of asbestos are very well known, but Waxport Ltd failed to carry out a proper risk assessment putting their own staff, contractors and other people working in the building at risk of being exposed to airborne fibres.

"The company were required to have a comprehensive asbestos management plan in place identifying where asbestos was located but they failed to do this. In this case, an asbestos survey was only carried out after the incident occurred.

"Working on or near damaged asbestos-containing materials or breathing in high levels of asbestos fibres, which may be many hundreds of times that of environmental levels could increase workers' chances of getting an asbestos-related disease."

When asbestos fibres are inhaled they can cause serious diseases which are responsible for around 4000 deaths a year. There are four main diseases caused by asbestos: mesothelioma, lung cancer, asbestosis and diffuse pleural thickening (not fatal). Mesothelioma is always fatal, and lung cancer is almost always fatal.

More information on asbestos, including HSE's Hidden Killer campaign can be found on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm>

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