Company fined £240,000 after Liverpool residents put at risk during removal of dangerous cladding

A health and safety inspector found cladding lying on residents' balconies at a Liverpool apartment block, posing a serious fire risk.

The combustible cladding was similar to that used on Grenfell Tower when the 2017 disaster occurred. Green Facades Limited had been contracted to remove the potentially dangerous aluminium composite panels and combustible insulation material from The Circle, an eight-storey building on Henry Street in Liverpool.

When an inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) first visited the site on 10 January 2022, the inspection revealed that, in preparation for the removal work, combustible material had been left exposed and there were inadequate means of escaping from the scaffold which was being erected.

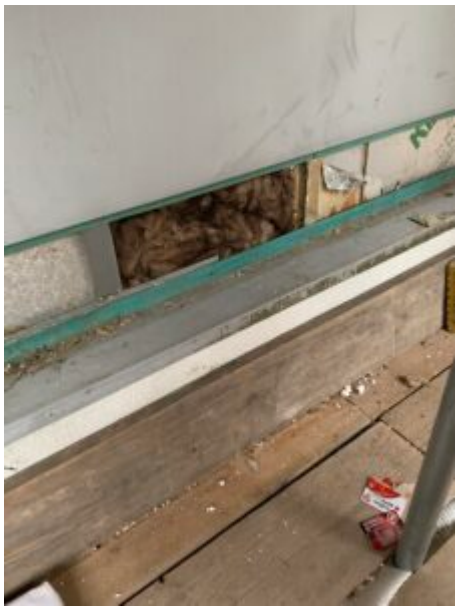
Combustible material exposed where scaffold is attached to the building

The situation had worsened when the inspector returned a few days later, on 21 January 2022. Further combustible material had been exposed with no protection from potential sources of ignition, and combustible cladding material was found lying on residents' balconies. As the building remained occupied during the works, the inspector alerted Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service who took their own enforcement action.

Green Facades Limited had been subject to earlier enforcement for similar breaches during cladding removal at a site in London. At that time the company was provided with advice on sustainable compliance with the

regulations.

An investigation by HSE found that Green Facades Limited, had failed to take appropriate precautions to address the risk of fire and to ensure the safety of residents, workers, and others. It had also failed to take account of published guidance on the safe removal of cladding following the previous issue in London.



Exposed combustible material on exterior of the building

The company of Woolwich Road, London pleaded guilty to breaching regulations 11(1) and 13(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. AT Liverpool Magistrates' Court the company was fined £240,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,405.

After the hearing HSE inspector Jackie Western said: "The disturbing irony of this case is that work to protect residents from fire risk ended up making the situation more dangerous.

"This prosecution highlights the need for responsible management of the removal of cladding. The potentially tragic consequences of fire involving this type of material are well known following the Grenfell Tower fire.

"Despite earlier interventions and advice from HSE, and the availability of a wealth of guidance from HSE and others, this company continued to fail in its duty to address the risk of fire, putting people's lives at risk."

This prosecution was supported by HSE lawyer Matthew Reynolds.

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.

2. More information about the legislation referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest HSE news releases is available.
4. Guidance for managing the risk of fire during cladding removal and replacement is available.
5. Information about the Building Safety Regulator can be found on HSE's website or on our Making Buildings Safer