

Company fined for exposing employees to dust

A furniture manufacturer has been fined after exposing its employees to significant quantities of hardwood dust, a hazardous substance known to cause occupational asthma and nasal cancer.

Luton Magistrates' Court heard how employees in Andrena Furniture Ltd's workshop were exposed to hardwood dust on a daily basis. One of the reasons for such high levels of the hazardous substance was found to be the company's extraction system, which when tested was found to be inefficient during a HSE inspection in 2016.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also found that following previous visits, and verbal and written advice, the company failed to ensure standards achieved following previous inspections were maintained. The investigation also found the company should have identified its workshop contained significant quantities of hardwood dust and then do all that it could to reduce exposure to its employees, including ensuring extraction was working efficiently and implementing a robust cleaning regime.

Andrena Furniture Ltd of Geddings Road, Hoddesdon, Herts pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 7(1) and 9(2)(a) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and was fined £8,000. The company was also ordered to pay costs of £1081.40.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Sandra Dias said: "Andrena Furniture Ltd was fully aware of the health and safety standards it needed to maintain.

"Breathing in dust can cause life-changing lung disease or make existing conditions worse. Thousands of people die from work-related lung diseases every year, often due to continued exposure over a long period of time.

"Everyone has the right to go home healthy from work and employers must do the right thing to protect their workers and ensure this happens.

"This case should serve as a warning to others that HSE takes seriously repeated breaches of health and safety law that exposes employees to health risks."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We to 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. [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

legislation.gov.uk/

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. More on HSE's Go Home Healthy campaign here:
hse.gov.uk/gohomehealthy/index.htm

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.