

Company sentenced after employees exposed to silica dust

A stone masonry company has been sentenced after failing to adequately control employees' exposure to respirable silica dust, resulting in an employee developing silicosis.

Burnley Magistrates' Court heard how prior to 2017, employees of GO Stonemasonry Limited in Accrington carried out work that resulted in exposure to respirable silica dust.





An investigation by the HSE found that G0 Stonemasonry Limited had been cutting and working with stone for several years without any suitable and sufficient dust extraction. The company failed to ensure that respiratory protective equipment (RPE) was adequately controlling the inhalation exposure to respiratory silica dust. The company did not have appropriate work processes, systems or control measures in place and had no health surveillance to identify any early signs of effects on workers' health.

G0 Stonemasonry Limited, of Turkey Red Industrial Estate, Baxenden, Accrington, pleaded Guilty of breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £8000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000.

HSE inspector Sharon Butler said after the hearing "Silica is found in most rocks, sand and clay and in products such as bricks and concrete. In the workplace these materials create dust when they are cut, sanded or carved. Some of this dust may be fine enough to breathe deeply into your lungs and is known as respirable crystalline silica. Exposure to this dust can cause silicosis, leading to impaired lung function, breathing problems and is life threatening.

"Simple steps to stop workers breathing in the dust must be taken and companies should know HSE will not hesitate to take action against those failing to protect their workers' health."

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>
4. More information on working safely in the stone industry can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stonemasonry/index.htm>

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