

DCM vapour killed a construction worker

A brick and stonework restoration company, Brick Restoration Ltd and its two directors, Stewart Bailey and John McCole, have been sentenced following the death of a construction worker.

Alexandru Sorin was overcome by dichloromethane ('DCM') vapour whilst using a DCM-based paint stripper at a property in London on 25 July 2017.

Mr Sorin was working on his own stripping paint from the walls of a lightwell in the basement of Berkeley Gardens, London. DCM vapour is heavier than air and can accumulate in confined spaces with poor ventilation. While carrying out the work Mr Sorin was overcome by the DCM vapour and died from the exposure.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Brick Restoration Ltd failed to implement any effective measures to control Mr Sorin's exposure to DCM. His death could have been prevented by eliminating the risk associated with DCM by using a different removal method or by substituting the DCM paint remover for a less hazardous product.

At City of London Magistrates' Court, Brick Restoration Ltd of Worboys Road, Worcester, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 7(1) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and were fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64.

Stewart Bailey of Worboys Road, Worcestershire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64.

John McCole of Savill Gardens, London also pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service and ordered to pay costs of £2,805.64

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector, Owen Rowley, said: 'Mr Sorin's death was entirely avoidable. DCM is a volatile solvent and exposure to high concentrations of vapour can cause loss of consciousness and death.

"Anyone intending work with DCM-based products should carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and implement appropriate control measures. Crucially, DCM-based products should only be used in well ventilated areas to prevent the build-up of vapour."

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. Further guidance on working safely can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/dcm2.pdf>