

Food manufacturer fined £120,000 after workers exposed to hazardous dust and manual handling risks

A food manufacturer has been fined after employees were at risk of developing occupational asthma at a factory in Buckingham.

Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court heard how workers at Puratos Limited were at risk after HSE found the levels of inhalable dust at the site could cause illnesses such as occupational asthma.

A HSE inspection carried out on 03 December 2024 identified a number of unsafe practices, including dust escaping from machinery due to leaks, the use of compressed airlines to blow down dust deposits and dry sweeping using brushes and brooms.

A workplace dust monitoring report from 18 December 2024 confirmed that employees were exposed to inhalable dust concentrations above the workplace exposure limits set by HSE during the testing undertaken.

HSE has been carrying out a series of inspections at large bakeries across Great Britain from January 2026. Inspectors have been checking that employers are properly protecting workers from the dangers of dusty ingredients including flour dust.

The investigation also found that workers were required to manually lift 25kg sacks of ingredients on a daily basis. Repeated manual handling of heavy loads can lead to musculoskeletal injuries and should be avoided where reasonably practicable.

The site had also previously been inspected in 2021 with enforcement action being taken in relation to employees' exposure to dust as well as manual handling risks arising from its food manufacturing activities.

Puratos Limited, of Buckingham Industrial Park, Buckingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6270 at Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court on 17 July 2026.

Following the hearing, HSE inspector Emma Page said:

"Too many workers in bakeries are suffering from unnecessary exposure to dusty ingredients, including flour. When employers prevent exposure, the risk of occupational asthma is removed.

"In the food and drink industries, around one-third of reportable injuries are acute injuries caused by handling and lifting. Employers must ensure they are properly protecting workers from the dangers of dusty ingredients and the manual handling of heavy materials."

Notes to Editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
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. Relevant guidance can be found here: [Flour \(Bakers and millers\) – COSHH](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).