

Health and Safety Executive authorises Crown Censure of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service following radon exposure at HMP Dartmoor

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has today notified His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) of its intention to issue a Crown Censure following an investigation into radon exposure at HMP Dartmoor in Devon. The investigation found that HMPPS failed to adequately manage radon exposure at the prison.

The Health and Safety Executive was first notified by HMPPS of suspected overexposure in February 2023. Subsequent monitoring confirmed that radon concentrations in areas of the prison, including prisoner accommodation, resulted in prisoners and staff being exposed to radiation levels above the legal limit.

HSE's investigation concluded both prisoners and staff had been exposed to radon significantly above the specified dose limits for a prolonged period of time.

HSE took enforcement action highlighting breaches of the regulations in both February and in December 2023. HMPPS decided to mothball HMP Dartmoor in 2024.

Following an investigation by HSE inspectors, a file was passed to HSE's legal services division for review, which in accordance with Code for Crown Prosecutors has authorised a Crown Censure.

A Crown Censure is the maximum sanction available to HSE against a Crown body. A decision to authorise a Crown Censure is not a formal finding of guilt – is equivalent to a decision to authorise criminal charges, in line with the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

Following the decision to issue a Crown Censure, a formal hearing will take place to confirm the censure.

If a censure is confirmed at a hearing, it acts as an official reprimand and provides a lasting, public record of a Crown body's failure to comply with the law. There is no financial penalty.

Further Information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety.

Crown Censure is the process by which HSE holds Crown bodies to account for serious breaches of health and safety law. You can find a record of Crown

Censures issued by HSE at: [Crown Censures taken by HSE since 1 April 1999](#)

No additional charges or sanctions against other organisations or individuals are being brought in relation to radon exposure at HMP Dartmoor.

Radon exposure & legal limits

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. Parts of Devon, including Dartmoor, are in areas where higher radon levels can occur due to the underlying geology. Breathing in radon is the second largest cause of lung cancer in the UK, resulting in over 1000 fatal cancers per year.

Radon concentration is measured in Becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³). The legal limit for radon exposure is set out in the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017. This sets exposure limits for employees and other persons.

HSE is responsible for ensuring workplaces comply with the regulations – and provides guidance for employers: [Radon in the workplace – HSE](#)

To find out more about radon and related health risks, visit [UKradon – Home](#)