

Maintenance company fined £400,000 after worker dies from toxic glue exposure

A housing association maintenance company has been fined £400,000 after an employee died from inhaling toxic vapours from flooring adhesive.

Darren Nevill, 38, was working for Connect Property Services Limited laying a vinyl bathroom floor at a domestic property in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire on 9 December 2020.

His employer purchased an adhesive containing Dichloromethane (DCM), a highly volatile solvent. Small volumes will give off large amounts of colourless, low odour vapour, even at room temperature. He used this regularly during his employment.

On the day of his death, the hose to the pressurised glue canister became damaged, releasing a large amount of adhesive into the poorly ventilated bathroom. Mr Nevill lost consciousness and collapsed. Emergency services had to force entry to the bathroom to reach him.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Connect Property Services Limited, of Ealing Gateway, 26-30 Uxbridge Road, London, had failed to take appropriate precautions to ensure substances hazardous to health are not used when safer alternatives are available.

HSE guidance on [Dichloromethane \(DCM\)](#) states to avoid the use of DCM-based products whenever reasonably practicable, by using suitable and safer alternative products or methods. DCM-based products should only be used in well-ventilated areas, to prevent the build-up of vapour. Examples of poorly ventilated areas can include bathrooms, cellars, stairwells and sheeted enclosures.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. At Stevenage Magistrates Court on 26 January 2026, Connect Property Services Limited was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £9676.81 with a surcharge of £190.

Prosecutor Jon Mack told the court “HSE scientists calculated that the statutory 15-minute exposure limit for DCM would have been reached within 2-13 seconds, and the final concentration in the bathroom at the time of Mr Nevill’s death would have been 84.5 times the exposure limit. Mr Nevill was found to have three times the fatal concentration of DCM.”

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Rauf Ahmed said: “Our thoughts today are with the family of Mr Nevill, who was just setting out on his career in construction. He should have returned home safely to his family at the end of his working day but, because of the failings of Connect Property

Services Limited, he did not."

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Neenu Bains and paralegal officer Helen Jacob.

Further Information

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 [Dichloromethane \(DCM\) – COSHH – HSE](#)
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](#).