

Health and Safety Executive supports workers' health at Great Britain's construction sites

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HSE has partnered with construction and occupational health organisations to highlight the control measures required on site to prevent exposure to dust. The network of *Dust Kills* partners includes British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), **Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC)** and Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA), Construction Leadership Council (CLC), Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) and Construction Dust Partnership.

HSE's chief inspector of construction, Sarah Jardine, said: "Occupational lung disease is preventable. It can have a devastating impact on both the individuals affected and their family. Every year, construction workers are dying from diseases caused or made worse by their work. We are urging employers and workers to take the necessary precautions today to protect their long-term lung health."

As part of HSE's longer term health and work strategy to improve health within the construction industry, inspectors will be checking the control measures in place to protect workers from inhaling construction dust including Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) and wood dust.

The primary aim of the inspection initiative is to ensure workers' health is being protected. However, if safety risks or other areas of concern are identified, inspectors will take the necessary action to deal with them.

Sarah Jardine continued: "Through our inspection initiatives, inspectors can visit a range of construction sites to check the action businesses are taking to ensure their workers' health is being protected. Through speaking to dutyholders we can make sure they have considered the job from start to

finish and are effectively managing the risks.

“We want everyone, workers and their employers, to be aware of the risks associated with any task that produces dust and use effective control measures, such as water suppression, extraction and masks, to prevent exposure to dust to ensure they are protected from harm and ill health.”

The initiative will be supported by HSE’s *Dust Kills* campaign, aimed at influencing employer behaviour by encouraging builders to download free guidance and advice. There is also information to support workers, helping them to understand the risks and how to stay healthy.

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Tina Conroy, Chartered Occupational Hygienist, Lead of BOHS’s Breathe Freely in Construction campaign said “Exposure to a range of hazardous dusts in the construction industry can be fatal, or at least life-changing, affecting not only those who develop diseases resulting from their work, but also their friends and family. Our aim is to ensure that every construction worker can return to their families reassured that they won’t develop life-changing, and often fatal, lung disease.

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“Some of the possible reasons include lack of awareness of the legal duties of employers, lack of awareness of the damage dust can actually cause and lack of time on projects to plan work properly, and that’s both at the design stage and on site. Working together with HSE and other stakeholders, we hope

to provide valuable advice to those that need it most.”

Dylan Roberts, Director Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Skanska UK and co-lead of the Construction Leadership Council’s Health, Safety & Wellbeing workstream said “Ensuring everyone goes home healthy everyday is a challenge but one which cannot be compromised. I believe that education is key to safeguarding health. Raising awareness and understanding that dust kills is fundamental to preventing harm.”

Mary Cameron, Construction Dust Partnership said “The construction dust partnership is an industry collaboration with an aim to raise awareness within the construction industry about lung diseases related to hazardous workplace dust and to promote good control practice to prevent these diseases. Construction Dust Partnership is a firm supporter of HSE’s *Dust Kills* campaign. We share strongly in the motives of this campaign which is to raise awareness amongst construction workers about the risks to their respiratory ill health from potential exposures to hazardous dusts.

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Kills partners includes British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC) and Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA), Construction Leadership Council (CLC), Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) and Construction Dust Partnership. HSE's chief inspector of construction, Sarah Jardine, said: "Occupational lung disease is preventable. It can have a devastating impact on both the individuals affected and their family. Every year, construction workers are dying from diseases caused or made worse by their work. We are urging employers and workers to take the necessary precautions today to protect their long-term lung health." As part of HSE's longer term health and work strategy to improve health within the construction industry, inspectors will be checking the control measures in

place to protect workers from inhaling construction dust including Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) and wood dust. The primary aim of the inspection initiative is to ensure workers' health is being protected. However, if safety risks or other areas of concern are identified, inspectors will take the necessary action to deal with them. Sarah Jardine continued: "Through our inspection initiatives, inspectors can visit a range of construction sites to check the action businesses are taking to ensure their workers' health is being protected. Through speaking to dutyholders we can make sure they have considered the job from start to finish and are effectively managing the risks. "We want everyone, workers and their employers, to be aware of the risks associated with any task that produces dust and use effective control measures, such as water

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Chartered Occupational Hygienist, Lead of BOHS's Breathe Freely in Construction campaign said "Exposure to a range of hazardous dusts in the construction industry can be fatal, or at least life-changing, affecting not only those who develop diseases resulting from their work, but also their friends and family. Our aim is to ensure that every construction worker can return to their families reassured that they won't develop life-changing, and often fatal, lung disease. "This month, as the HSE's inspectors visit businesses across the country, BOHS is urging employers and employees across the construction industry to become more aware about how dusts can harm the lungs of worker and how simple, low-cost control measures can be taken to control exposures to dust. Information outlining best practice in preventing occupational lung disease is available

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amongst construction workers about the risks to their respiratory ill health from potential exposures to hazardous dusts. “By working as a team, we bring a sense of unity to this. We stand together and fight together for the same purpose. And when the purpose is something as crucially important as protecting the health of construction workers, then we need to get involved. As health and safety professionals, occupational hygienist, managers who oversee the health and safety of their workers, we all have not just a need but a duty to join in on campaigns aimed to protect worker’s health.”

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Company sentenced after worker fall from height

Abbots Mead Limited, a building maintenance company based in Cheshire has been fined £20,000 for poorly managing work at height while carrying out repairs to a roof and cleaning the gutters of a commercial unit in Wolverhampton.

Dudley Magistrates Court heard that on 29 January 2021 while carrying out repairs works to a fragile roof of a commercial unit, an apprentice employee fell through a skylight. The employee fell approximately six metres to the concrete floor of the warehouse below contacting the racking on the fall. His injuries included fractures to the hip and wrist.

An investigation by the Health and safety executive (HSE) found that employees had not been informed they were working on a fragile roof and no measures had been implemented for working on a fragile surface. The company failed to properly risk assess the task and to provide the appropriate control measures to prevent a fall.

Abbots Mead Limited, of Knutsford Way, Sealand Industrial Estate, Chester, pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and received a £20,000 fine. Abbots Mead Ltd were also ordered to pay costs of £3,873 and a victim surcharge.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Aaron Fisher said: “Falls from

height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known.

“Companies and individuals in control should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standard.”

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Scottish care provider found guilty of Health and Safety breaches following death of a vulnerable adult

Care provider, The Richmond Fellowship Scotland, has been fined after being found guilty of health and safety breaches after a vulnerable adult with severe learning difficulties drowned in a bath.

Glasgow Sherriff’s Court heard that on 10 June 2016, at Cherry Tree Court in Cambuslang, Glasgow, one of the residents, Margaret Glasgow, a vulnerable adult with severe learning difficulties, drowned in a bath within her flat in the early hours of the morning.

The Richmond Fellowship had supplied a baby monitor to alert support workers that Ms Glasgow was out of bed but a HSE investigation found that it was neither suitable nor sufficient as she was so light on her feet.

The two support workers, one of which was on her first shift at Cherry Tree Court and who also were supporting four different service users in four different flats, failed to hear that Ms Glasgow was out of bed.

Sometime during the early hours of the morning of 10 June 2016, she was able

to run a bath in which she subsequently drowned. The water to the flat should also have been isolated but neither carer knew to do so.

HSE's investigation concluded that there were severe staff shortages at the time of Ms Glasgow's death which resulted in two carers who were not familiar with Ms Glasgow being put in charge of her care over-night. Richmond Fellowship had no specific induction procedures at Cherry Tree Court and relied on staff finding time to read the care plans after their shift had commenced. There were no clear shift plans to alert the support workers to the critical needs of the four people they were supporting and no clear instructions on how checks should be made.

Staff had raised concerns on a number of occasions after finding Ms Glasgow out of bed, but Richmond Fellowship had failed to put more appropriate measures such as door sensors or pressure mats in place.

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland of Cumbernauld Road, North Lanarkshire pleaded not guilty to charges under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974 but were found guilty following a two-week trial.

The organisation was fined £450,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Kathryn Wilson, said: "This was a desperately tragic case which has left Ms Glasgow's family devastated.

"The baby monitor was a wholly inappropriate method of alerting staff that a resident was out of bed, being designed to alert a parent that a baby is crying or choking.

"Margaret Glasgow should have been safe at Cherry Tree Court but a failure by the Richmond Fellowship Scotland to identify and put in place simple and reasonably practicable safety measures resulted in two support workers being given insufficient information to protect this vulnerable lady in their care."

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Sea food processing company fined after fatality involving forklift

A sea food processing company has been fined after a worker died following injuries sustained when she was run over by a forklift

Lerwick Sheriff Court heard on 31 January 2018, that Karen Allen' an employee of QA Fish Ltd suffered significant leg injuries as a pedestrian, following a vehicular collision in Scalloway, Shetland.

A joint investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Police Scotland found that no site-specific workplace transport risk assessment had been carried out. The use of the forklift truck was critical for the function of the business and the company failed to provide suitable and sufficient control measures to ensure that pedestrians and vehicles could circulate in a safe manner in the exterior of the premises, particularly with regards to the forklift truck.

The company failed to implement effective arrangements for the management of health and safety and also failed to act on the advice of a health and safety consultant several years prior to the incident.

QA Fish Ltd of Blacksness Pier, Shetland have pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and have been fined £80,000, to be paid within 12 months.

Speaking after the case HSE inspector Connor Gibson said "The tragic outcome of this incident clearly highlights why dutyholders must ensure that vehicle and pedestrian movements at their work site are properly assessed and adequately controlled. This fatal incident could and should have been prevented via suitable and sufficient control measures segregating pedestrians from vehicle movements."

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