

Two companies fined for serious breaches involving the removal of asbestos

A residential property management company and a specialist installation contractor have been fined after a resident raised concerns about soffit replacement work carried out on the guttering on three blocks of flats in London.

Westminster Magistrates' Court heard that in July 2016, Squaredeal UPVC & Renewables Limited of Rustington, West Sussex ('Squaredeal') had been contracted by Wildheart Residential Management Limited of Ewell, Epsom, Surrey ('Wildheart') to replace the soffits on the blocks in a housing estate at Sutton Grove, Sutton, London.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Wildheart instructed Squaredeal to carry out the work, but failed to check whether the soffits contained asbestos. Squaredeal had the soffits analysed and became aware they contained asbestos but started to remove the soffits without adequate precautions to ensure workers and residents were protected.

Squaredeal UPVC & Renewables Limited was fined a total of £18,500, and ordered to pay £5,607.90 in costs after pleading guilty to offences under Regulations 5, 8(1) and 11(1) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

Wildheart Residential Management Limited was fined £8,000, and ordered to pay £3000 in costs after pleading guilty to an offence under Regulation 4(3) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

HSE inspector Fu Lee commented after the hearing:

"The work risked not only the workers, but also the residents of the flats being exposed to disturbed asbestos. Exposure to asbestos can lead to a number of diseases, including asbestosis or fibrosis (scarring) of the lungs; lung cancer and mesothelioma. These diseases are irreversible, disabling and in most cases eventually fatal.

"The latest statistics show that asbestos related disease cause approximately 3000 deaths a year. All asbestos-related diseases typically take many years to develop after exposure.

"This incident could have been avoided if the companies had taken appropriate action to identify the type of asbestos and engage an appropriately qualified contractor to carry out the work safely."

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. [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
3. Further HSE news releases are available at [press.hse.gov.uk](https://www.press.hse.gov.uk)

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.