Getting rid of Asbestos

by Kevin McBride

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Despite well publicised health risks and extensive legislation covering the management, removal and disposal of asbestos, the problem of asbestos in the workplace remains.

The Arcadia Group Ltd along with contractor Vincents (Shopfitters) Ltd were prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive. Despite the fact that a survey ordered before the project started had identified the presence of asbestos , they both allowed refurbishment work at the Liverpool outlet to go ahead.

â€œNeither company took adequate action to prevent workers being exposed, despite a survey alerting them that asbestos was present in the building." said Warren Pennington, the investigating inspector at HSE. "The refurbishment workâ€¦ was likely to disturb the asbestos, so a licensed specialist contractor should have carried it out.â€•

Air conditioning, sprinklers and other equipment next to ceiling beams, which had been coated with sprayed asbestos to protect from fire before the dangers of the material became widely known were removed by workers, exposing them to asbestos fibres.

Liverpool Magistrates' Court issued the maximum fine the court could issue and fined Arcadia Â£5,000 with legal costs of Â£10,769. Vincents were also fined the maximun penalty available, Â£10,000 plus Â£10,769 costs.

Pennington added: â€œUp to 45 individuals who were working in the building now have to live with the knowledge that they may become ill with a life-threatening lung disease.â€•

There are scores of incidents such as this where big or small companies have been fined for exposing their workers to asbestos. Life-threatening incidents like this can be easily avoided. If employers surveyed the property for the presence of asbestos prior to the start of construction work, any asbestos would be identified and arrangements could be made for its controlled removal by an HSE-licensed contractor.

There are particular laws and rules around the disposal of any waste, but specifically hazardous substances like asbestos.

Prices for asbestos removal and asbestos disposal will vary by company, and will be based on how involved the job is. The chief concern is the health of all those who are being exposed to asbestos and a lot of people do not regard cost to be the most crucial factor.

Once you have chosen an asbestos removal company, the process of having these materials removed and disposed of can begin. The amount of time that this will take will vary depending on where the materials are located, and just how much needs to be removed. Special precautions must be taken during the removal process to ensure the health of everyone involved.

What you save by removing asbestos yourself may not be worth the cost of your health. Think carefully if your company ask you to remove or dispose of asbestos. It really is worth calling in a specialist company when you are dealing with asbestos removal and asbestos disposal. The HSE reports that asbestos is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK, estimating that 4,000 people die from exposure to it every year.

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