

Two UK Firms prosecuted for “not taking Legionella risk seriously”

An investigation by the HSE in 2006 after a worker at Eaton Ltd's factory in Tamworth, Staffordshire, contracted Legionnaires disease, has led to the prosecution of multinational automotive parts manufacturer Eaton Ltd, and water treatment services provider, Aegis Ltd of Felspar Road. The two firms were fined nearly £250,000 after it was found that workers and members of the public were exposed to the potentially fatal Legionella bacteria.

HSE inspectors told Wolverhampton Crown Court that Eaton Ltd had not properly managed the water cooling systems used in manufacturing processes at the Brierley Hill plant. The investigation uncovered that Aegis Ltd had been contracted by Eaton Ltd to provide water treatment services on the manufacturers water cooling systems. The court heard that Aegis Ltd had also failed significantly in their duties, leading to an unsafe level of Legionella bacterium in the system.

The HSE outlined to the court, that Eaton Ltd did not have a comprehensive and up-to-date risk assessment in place and that both companies had failed to take the necessary steps to control the potential spread of Legionella. The court also heard that employees had not been properly supervised and that inadequate procedures were absent over a prolonged period of time. The water towers which need to be taken apart and treated every six months had not been attended to for more than two years prior to the HSE's visit.

While no link was found between the actions of Eaton Ltd and the site worker who contracted and subsequently died from the disease, the HSE found the firm to be in breach of health and safety laws.

Eaton Ltd was fined £80,000 for breaching Section 2(1) and Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was ordered to pay £45,000 costs.

Aegis Ltd was fined £40,000 for breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was ordered to pay £80,000 costs.

HSE Inspector Paul Billinger stated:

"It is vital that companies who use water cooling treatment as part of their manufacturing processes have plans in place to make sure the level of Legionella bacteria in their systems does not become unsafe".

"Neither Eaton Ltd nor Aegis Ltd, which was specifically contracted to manage the water system, took the Legionella risk seriously. They failed to deal with their own risk assessment and service agreement in respect of cleaning the system".

Legionnaires' disease is caused by bacteria found naturally in rivers, lakes and reservoirs, but which can multiply and become dangerous in some purpose-built water systems

Frontline Energy and Environmental Guarantee:

At Frontline Energy and Environmental, we are dedicated to ensuring the highest standards of Health and Safety for all our clients.

We are leading expert providers of professional Legionella control, prevention and associated environmental hygiene and risk management consulting services to organisations. Our expertise extends across a wide range of commercial, industrial, healthcare, governmental and non-profit sectors. We will ensure your organisation complies with health and safety laws by offering:

Legionella Risk Assessments

Our professional Legionella risk assessments and integrated risk management programmes ensure the control and management of Legionella and other waterborne bacterium that may exist in water systems.

Risk Management

Our proactive management and effective control programmes ensure it is possible to significantly reduce the factors that allow those bacteria responsible to multiply.

The Frontline Energy and Environmental maintenance program helps to eliminate potential microbial problems and reduces the concern for disease transmittal.

For further information or to discuss preventative measures please contact:

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