



Article published on November 29th 2011 | [Home Improvement](#)

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

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

“Neither 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 work was likely to disturb the asbestos, so a licensed specialist contractor should have carried it out.”

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 £5,000 with legal costs of £10,769. Vincents was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £10,769 costs, also the maximum penalty available.

Pennington added: “Up 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.”

There are scores of incidents such as this where big or small companies have been fined for exposing their workers to asbestos. These are life-threatening incidents and ones that can be simply 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 rules and laws 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 extensive the job is. Lots of people regard the cost to not be the most significant factor, as the chief concern is the health of all those who are being exposed to asbestos

Once you have selected 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. Particular precautions must be taken during the removal process to ensure the health of everyone involved.

It may not be worth compromising your health by saving money and removing asbestos yourself. 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 estimates that 4,000 people die from exposure to asbestos every year and report that asbestos is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK.

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[Joseph Bendure](#) - About Author:

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