

Water Hygiene Management and the Importance of Acting on the Advice You Receive

G4S Cash Solutions has been fined £1.8 million after failing to reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease from its water systems. In October 2013, a G4S worker was reported to have contracted Legionnaires' disease, which causes flu-like symptoms and can, in some cases, lead to life-threatening problems.

Harlow Council investigated, but environmental health officers were unable to prove that the worker had contracted the disease from the site. However, the council did uncover a serious lack of compliance in maintaining water systems at the workplace.

The council began prosecution proceedings and G4S pleaded guilty to two charges under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 in June.

The judge at Chelmsford Crown Court sentenced G4S to pay £1.8 million in fines and court costs of £34,000.

A spokesperson for Harlow Council said:

"The environmental health officers found monitoring and testing of systems was erratic."

"Staff had received inadequate training and there were no up to date policies or suitable and sufficient risk assessments in place to safely operate or manage the building's water systems."

"G4S did not take steps required to reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease from its water systems."

"This was despite a long-standing duty, extensive guidance, advice from their own consultants and advice from Harlow Council."

At court, representatives from G4S said they have since taken measures to improve the health and safety at their Harlow site. Councillor Danny Purton, portfolio holder for environment, said: "The health and safety of our citizens is our number one priority." He added: "Although some improvements were made it took G4S almost three years to reach minimum standards to protect its staff and visitors from exposure to Legionella bacteria."

"The fine should send a message to other companies. Legionnaires' disease is a real risk and companies need to take their health and safety duties to their employees and others seriously."

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