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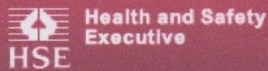
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CHIMNEYS, COMBUSTION APPLIANCE AND SMOKE NUISANCE

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HEALTH AND SAFETY CASE STUDIES



North Devon housing company prosecuted again for safety failings

Date:

13 August 2015

A South-West housing firm have been sentenced after capping off a chimney at one of their occupied properties despite the chimney being in use.

The incident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which prosecuted North Devon Homes Ltd at Barnstaple Magistrates' Court today (13 Aug).

The court heard North Devon Homes Ltd employees were investigating damp at a property at Church Lake, Landkey and in an attempt to solve the problem removed a chimney and tiled over the roof leaving the chimney terminating within the home's loft despite that fact the chimney was being used to flue the gas fire and gas boiler.

Several weeks after the work was completed the tenant went into the loft and found that there was a very strong unpleasant smell. At around this time the tenant's carbon monoxide alarm was also sounding. The tenant call the emergency gas services who came to their home and classed the situation as 'immediately dangerous' meaning the situation could be an immediate risk to life.


North Devon Homes Ltd of Westacott Road, Barnstaple, pleaded guilty to a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined a total of £6,000 and ordered to pay £833 in costs.

HSE Inspector, Simon Jones, speaking after the hearing, said: "This was an incredibly dangerous situation where gas appliances were left to pump potentially poisonous and fatal gasses into the loft space of a home instead of to outside the property.

"Whenever a chimney is removed or capped careful checks should be taken to ensure that the chimney is not being used and cannot be used in the future.

“Proper control by North Devon Homes Ltd and clear work instructions would have prevented this dangerous situation from arising and putting the lives of their tenants at risk.”

Notes to Editors

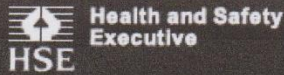
1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. www.hse.gov.uk^[1]
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ ^[2]
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>^[3]

Media contacts

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

Link URLs in this page

1. www.hse.gov.uk
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>
2. www.legislation.gov.uk/
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
3. <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
<http://press.hse.gov.uk/>



Insulation firm fined £500,000 over pensioner's carbon monoxide death

Date:

13 February 2015

A pensioner from Middleton died from carbon monoxide poisoning just hours after the flue on her gas boiler was blocked with cavity wall insulation, a court has heard.

HIS Energy Ltd was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following Joyce Moore's death, which occurred less than five hours after employees left her Middleton Road home.

Manchester Crown Court heard today (13 February) that the 83-year-old's son had received a cold call from Nationwide Energy Services Ltd in September 2012 offering free cavity wall insulation through a scheme subsidised by the energy companies.

The firm, which was featured on the BBC Three series 'The Call Centre', arranged for its sister company, HIS Energy Ltd, now in liquidation, to carry out the work.

On 9 October 2012, three HIS Energy Ltd employees visited the property where they drilled holes through the house bricks, before using a machine to blow thousands of insulation beads into the cavity between the outer and inner walls.

When one of the employees checked the boiler, he noticed a pile of insulation beads at the back of it and assumed they had come through a hole in the lining of the chimney.

The worker phoned the firm's main office, where he spoke to two managers to make them aware of the issue but neither of them arranged for a gas engineer to visit the property that evening.

Instead, Mrs Moore's son was advised not to use the boiler but the company failed to make him aware of the potentially fatal consequences of turning on the heating.

HIS Energy also failed to make sure the boiler was switched off before its employees left the property, failed to leave a warning notice on the boiler or with the homeowner, and failed to alert National Grid or a gas engineer, despite this being standard industry guidance.

Just after 8pm, Mrs Moore's son noticed the house was getting cold and so turned up the thermostat in the hall, causing the heating to come on. When he stood up from the sofa around two hours later, he felt dizzy and went to check on his mother. He found her slumped on her bed.

A post mortem confirmed the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. Mrs Moore's son and two paramedics were also hospitalised after tests found high levels of carbon monoxide in their blood.

The HSE investigation found HIS Energy did not provide adequate guidance for its employees on what to do if a boiler flue became blocked. The job packs in the company van contained examples of warning notices, but there were no actual notices which could be given to homeowners or stuck on boilers.

HIS Energy Ltd, which has since gone into voluntary liquidation, was found guilty of a single breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company, formerly of Northern Boulevard in Swansea, was fined £500,000 and ordered to pay £24,968.44 in prosecution costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Lisa Bailey said:

"It was a natural reaction for Mrs Moore's son to turn on the heating when it began to get cold, especially as he hadn't been made aware of the potential dangers.

"The boiler should have been switched off by the company, and warning signs should have been stuck on the side. If this had happened then I am sure the heating would have remained off throughout the evening.

"HIS Energy should also have arranged for a registered gas engineer or National Grid to visit to property as soon as possible but, again, this did not happen.

"The company knew about the risks from its work but its safety standards fell well below the legal minimum. As a result, an elderly woman has lost her life."

More information on gas safety is available at www.hse.gov.uk/gas^[1].

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Press enquiries

Regional reporters should call the appropriate [Regional News Network press office](#)^[4].

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2. www.hse.gov.uk
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>
3. <http://press.hse.gov.uk/>
4. Regional News Network press office
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Building firm in court over carbon monoxide risk to pregnant woman

Date:

27 February 2015

A building firm has been fined after an eight-and-half-month pregnant woman and her husband showed signs of carbon monoxide poisoning at their home in Kirkby.

Topflite (North West) Ltd was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after an investigation found that the flue for a gas fire had been blocked by rubble during a loft conversion in a neighbouring semi-detached property on Lauder Close.

Liverpool Magistrates' Court heard that the building work had been carried out by the company, which trades as Topflite Loft Conversions, in the summer of 2013. A few months later, on 31 October 2013, the woman, who does not want to be named, turned on the gas fire in her lounge for the first time that winter.

She spent most of the afternoon and evening in the lounge with her friend, who was also pregnant, and later her husband. The couple went to bed at 11pm but overnight the woman was vomiting and had flu-like symptoms.

She spent the following day in bed and her husband also felt nauseous all day. They suspected they may have suffered carbon monoxide poisoning and contacted a Gas Safe registered company.

The firm found that the flue in the cavity wall between the two properties, which allowed fumes to escape through a vent on the roof, had become blocked by rubble. The company therefore issued a warning notice preventing the use of the fire, and the homeowner alerted HSE.

When an inspector visited the neighbouring property, she found that a steel beam installed in the loft had broken through the flue and caused it to become blocked.

Topflite (North West) Ltd, of Steeley Lane in Chorley, was fined £4,000 and ordered to pay £1,276 in prosecution costs after pleading guilty to a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 on 26 February 2015.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Jacqueline Western said:

“A pregnant woman and her husband were put at risk of suffering carbon monoxide poisoning because Topflite allowed a flue to become blocked while carrying out a loft conversion in a neighbouring house.

“It’s vital that builders carefully consider the risks of any work they do in people’s homes, and that includes the impact it could have on attached properties. The work should have been properly planned so that the new steel beam could be installed without affecting the flue.

“Building firms have a legal duty to ensure the lives of both their workers and people affected by their work are not put at risk as a result of their actions. Topflite failed to meet that requirement and found itself in court as a result.”

More information on health and safety in the building industry is available at

www.hse.gov.uk/construction^[1].

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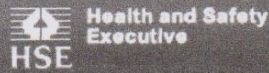
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1. www.hse.gov.uk/construction



Builder's work on chimney put elderly couple at risk

Date:

14 July 2014

A roofing contractor has been given a suspended prison sentence after an elderly couple was exposed to deadly fumes when his work on a chimney stack caused a blockage above a gas fire.

John Stanley had been hired to sort out a water leak between a double chimney stack and roof tiles by householders at a property on Black Swan Lane, Luton in August 2011. However, his team's repair work blocked the chimney above the gas fire, leading to a potentially-dangerous leak of combustion fumes within the property's loft space.

The incident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which today (14 July) prosecuted Mr Stanley at Luton Magistrates' Court.

Magistrates heard that employees of Mr Stanley, 47, from Luton, had dismantled the old double chimney to just below roof tile level, made some repairs to roof timbers and felt, then built a single chimney stack back up.

What they failed to do was check the flue for the gas fire in the property's back living room was still in full working order. It later emerged that it was this chimney that was blocked by the firm when the stack was rebuilt instead of the chimney of the disused and boarded-up fireplace in the property's front living room.

The householders only found out about this in November 2012 when they had to call a Gas Safe registered engineer to examine the gas fire, which they were having trouble lighting.

A subsequent investigation by HSE found that the gas fire had been used for over a year with all the fumes going into the loft, over their bedroom, instead of through the flue and chimney – leaving them at serious risk over an extended period of time. A very simple smoke test would have highlighted the issue straight away after completion of the work.

John Stanley, of Hitchin Road, Luton, trading as King Roofing and Durable Plastics, pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3(2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. He was given a four-month prison sentence suspended for two years, and ordered to pay £500 compensation to the couple he put at risk.

Speaking after the hearing, investigating HSE Inspector Robert Meardon said:

"John Stanley's sub-standard work created an on-going breach and a prolonged risk to the safety of a vulnerable and elderly couple. It cost them a huge amount of unnecessary anxiety and a considerable amount of money to rectify – on top of their savings they had used to pay Mr Stanley for the work.

"When a chimney is the flue for a gas fire, it is a vital part of the gas installation and should only be done by a competent gas engineer on the Gas Safe Register.

"Mr Stanley advertised himself as a specialist roofing contractor, but he was never on the Gas Safe Register and not qualified to carry out gas work. He should have never undertaken this job knowing that a gas fire was linked to the chimney.

"This incident could have resulted in fatalities as gas fire fumes can contain poisonous carbon monoxide, which can kill. It is vital that building contractors are aware of the risks they create and comply with the laws in place to control the risks."

Russell Kramer, chief executive of Gas Safe Register, added:

"Every Gas Safe registered engineer carries a Gas Safe ID card, which shows who they are and the type of gas appliances they are qualified to work on.

"We always encourage the public to ask for and check the card and if they have any concerns about the safety of work carried out in their home, to speak to us. Every year we investigate thousands of reports of illegal gas work. Call us on 0800 408 5500 or visit our website at www.gassaferegister.co.uk.^[1]"

Further information about gas safety can be found online at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas>^[2]

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Builder's work on chimney put family at risk

Date:

27 April 2012

A family was exposed to deadly carbon monoxide fumes after building work on a chimney caused a blockage in a flue.

Builder Wayne Marshall had been engaged to carry out repairs to a joint chimney by householders at a property in Dulais Road, Seven Sisters in March 2010, but left an amount of rubble blocking the flue of the neighbouring property, leading to a leak of carbon monoxide.

Neath Port Talbot Magistrates' Court heard yesterday (26 April) that neither Mr Marshall or his subcontractors informed the neighbours, Steve Everett, his wife and daughter, that work had started so they had not turned off their boiler at the bottom of the flue.

The blockage of rubble restricted ventilation for the appliance causing incomplete combustion and the creation of carbon monoxide.

When the family returned home from work they heard their carbon monoxide alarm sounding and had to ventilate their house, leaving windows open all night.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector, Stephen Jones, said:

"This incident could have resulted in multiple fatalities. Anyone in control of rebuilding and renovation works, especially to chimneys and any flues, must take reasonable steps to establish what appliances, such as fires and boilers, are attached to them.

"They must make arrangements with everyone who may be affected to notify them when building works start and finish. This will allow time for the appliances to be extinguished.

"While the work is ongoing they must take reasonable steps to prevent anything from blocking the flue such as debris that may lead to a lack of ventilation and the possibility of carbon monoxide gas arising.

"Thankfully the family had the foresight to buy and fit a carbon monoxide alarm, otherwise they may have entered their home unaware of the danger and eventually been overcome by fumes."

Wayne Marshall, trading as Marshall Enterprises Home Improvements, of St Hillary Drive, Killay, Swansea pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3 (2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. He was fined £2,000 and ordered to pay £1,500 in costs.

Further information on the dangers of carbon monoxide can be found on the HSE website at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm>^[1]

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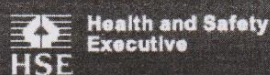
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3. Regional News Network press office
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/regional-contacts.htm>



HSE warns: Use qualified tradespeople to check your flues after Birmingham man is fined £15,000

HSE WM/511/08 12 May 2008

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is issuing a warning to the public to have any flued appliance carefully checked and serviced by qualified and competent persons. This follows a prosecution resulting from a report that the elderly occupant of a house in Canwell, Sutton Coldfield was suffering from symptoms similar to those of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. The investigation found incorrect installation work had been done.

The warning comes after Mr Angelo Buratti of Moseley, Birmingham, the director of JB Group of Companies Ltd pleaded guilty, by virtue of Sect 37(1), to a breach of section 3(1) the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £15,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,750.82 by Burton Magistrates Court.

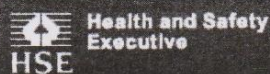
The court heard that Mr Buratti, had, following a chimney fire, organised repair work to a solid fuel burning appliance, through two painters and decorators known as 'Select'. An incorrect flue liner had been used in the work and the installation was left with other faults.

Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Dr Janice Dale said:

"The dangers of incorrectly specified flue liners and incorrect installations are well known in trades associated with building and refurbishment. Such dangerous work as that seen here puts lives at risk from both carbon monoxide poisoning and fires in the home.

"This case should serve as a reminder to the general public that anyone they ask to undertake work on a gas-fired or solid fuel appliance should be a specialist in that particular field. This case should also be a warning to traders that they must only undertake work for which they are qualified and competent."

Notes to editors



Chimney sweep fined for pensioner's death

Date:

11 February 2013

A chimney sweep has been sentenced after his failure to remove a bird's nest blocking a chimney flue led to the death of a pensioner in his South Wales home.

Phillip Jones, of Porthcawl, was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay £2,500 in costs at Cardiff Crown Court following a prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The court was told that 73-year-old retired miner Derwyn Rees of Maesteg Road, Llangynwyd, Maesteg had experienced problems keeping his solid fuel fire alight.

Mr Jones, who has been a sweep for 25 years, was asked to sweep the chimney and carried out the work on 5 September 2008 while Mr Rees' sister, was away.

The next day - Mr Rees' birthday - his neighbours noticed his curtains were still drawn and found him dead in his bed. Following a police-led investigation an inquest in October 2010 revealed he died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Further investigations by HSE and a solid fuel specialist revealed an extensive bird's nest inside the chimney.

Although Mr Jones had encountered a blockage of the chimney while sweeping, he did not check to see if his brush cleared the chimney pot which would indicate the blockage had been cleared. In addition, he failed to carry out a proper smoke test after completing the job, give advice to Mr Rees on ventilating the property or give any verbal or written warning.

HSE Inspector Stephen Jones, speaking after the hearing, said:

"This was a tragic incident and a great shock for Mr Rees' sister and their local community.

"Chimney sweeping is a vitally important job. Sadly Mr Rees paid for substandard work with his life.

was a 'continuing systemic failure'. However, he bore in mind that the company has a good health and safety record and as an organisation take health and safety and the safety of both employees and all tenants very seriously.

"The risk of dying from carbon monoxide exposure caused by a faulty solid fuel appliance is estimated to be up to ten times higher than that from a gas appliance but the risks are generally not as well known.

"As with gas appliances, burning solid fuel such as wood, coal or smokeless fuels, poses no danger as long as certain simple precautions are taken. The appliance needs to be installed and maintained correctly, and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

"Landlords and providers of social housing must make sure that solid fuel appliances are regularly maintained - chimneys must be swept regularly and they must make sure the tenant is capable of, and is actually carrying out, any safety-critical cleaning.

Notes to editors

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3. Gentoo Group Ltd was also ordered to pay a £15 victim surcharge

Press enquiries

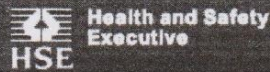
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Housing association fined after pensioner's death

Date:

30 June 2011

Release No:

NE/070/11

A North East housing association has been fined after a pensioner died in his home from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Gentoo Group Ltd, of Emperor Way, Sunderland - formerly known as Sunderland Housing Company Ltd - was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after 80-year-old George John Rutherford was found dead in his Penshaw home in 2007.

Newcastle Crown Court heard father-of-two Mr Rutherford had rented the property in Allendale Crescent for many years, but died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning on 17 June 2007. An inquest was held in November 2008 when Coroner Derek Winter recorded a verdict of accidental death.

Mr Rutherford's landlord Gentoo Group Ltd was charged with failing to properly maintain the coal fire at his home.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 5 (1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and was fined £40,000 with £25,000 costs at Newcastle Crown Court today (30 June).

After the case, HSE Principal Inspector Bruno Porter said:

"The judge accepted that although it cannot be said that Mr Rutherford's death occurred as a result of the company's breach there was at the very least a 'not insignificant risk of death'.

"The judge added that this was not an isolated breach, on the contrary it appears that this

was a 'continuing systemic failure'. However, he bore in mind that the company has a good health and safety record and as an organisation take health and safety and the safety of both employees and all tenants very seriously.

"The risk of dying from carbon monoxide exposure caused by a faulty solid fuel appliance is estimated to be up to ten times higher than that from a gas appliance but the risks are generally not as well known.

"As with gas appliances, burning solid fuel such as wood, coal or smokeless fuels, poses no danger as long as certain simple precautions are taken. The appliance needs to be installed and maintained correctly, and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

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Inquest hears falling fireplace killed two-year-old in Norwich in July

Council issues warning about DIY fixes after stone surround causes toddler fatal head injuries

Press Association
theguardian.com, Tuesday 26 August 2014 13.40 BST



Trinity Liliana Coward was killed in July when an improperly installed fire surround fell on her at home. Photograph: Norfolk police/PA

Parents have been warned of the dangers of DIY after an inquest heard a toddler was killed when a fireplace fell on her at her home.

Trinity Liliana Coward was found with serious head injuries after the mantelpiece of the stone and marble surround fell on her at her house in [Norwich](#) on 6 July.

The two-year-old was taken to the Norfolk and Norwich hospital but died shortly after arrival. An inquest in Norwich heard that her father, Shaun Coward, had glued the fireplace to the wall. Experts said this would not be strong enough to hold the heavy installation.

Dean King, a Norfolk county council trading standards officer, said that about one child

each year dies in the UK in a similar way. He said: "The incidents all involve surrounds made from stone which are fixed to a wall with an adhesive," adding that such projects should be undertaken by a specialist stonemason.

"It is not a suitable DIY project and should be approached by somebody with some knowledge of safe installation," he said.

The inquest heard the family bought the fireplace for between £100 and £200 from eBay about two years ago. Because it was secondhand, it did not come with fitting instructions. Mr Coward bought industrial-strength No More Nails-type glue from DIY store B&Q and fitted it to the wall with the help of his father-in-law, he said in a statement read to the hearing. He used more glue than recommended in an attempt to make sure it was safe.

Det Sgt Allison McCullough said: "Unfortunately we've all seen numerous adverts with a man hanging off skyscrapers with this type of glue."

Coroner Jacqueline Lake concluded that Trinity suffered an accidental death. She said: "This does highlight a lack of regulation in respect of the sale of secondhand fireplaces on a private basis and where they are fitted by an individual.

"Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Trinity's death highlights the dangers of carrying out do-it-yourself work in the home where a job like this requires professional installation. I make no criticism of Mr Coward – he was trying to make his home look nice and was unaware of the dangers he was facing."

In his statement, Mr Coward described how he watched the tragedy unfold. He said: "Trinity was happy, being cheeky and running around. She reached up to the fireplace and started swinging from it.

"All of a sudden it came away from the wall. I rushed over and expected her to respond the way she normally did when she had a fall but she was lifeless."

He added that her death had left him "absolutely devastated".

"She was my rock, She was a real daddy's girl. I wish I could have died so that she could have lived," he said.

The family did not attend the inquest but in a statement issued at the time of her death, they described Trinity as "our little princess". They said: "Your gorgeous smile and those dimples forever etched on our hearts."

Norfolk county council has since published advice to parents on how to avoid such accidents.



Elderly couple's fumes poisoning

The son of an elderly couple who died of carbon monoxide poisoning has urged people with solid fuel burners to ensure they are properly maintained.

Tom Evans, 91, and wife Hannah, 93, were found dead at their home in Llanfihangel ar Arth on 15 January.

Their son Dewi said it was important appliances were checked, after an inquest heard that both the solid fuel burner and chimney were blocked.

Inquest verdicts of accidental death were recorded.

The hearing in Llanelli was told that the couple were found by a neighbour in their sitting room.

Mr Evans, a retired farmer, was on the settee and Mrs Evans on an armchair, a few feet from the anthracite burner.

An expert was called to look at the system and found the throat-plate was 90% blocked, the chimney was partially-blocked, which was preventing the fumes from escaping.

The Carmarthenshire coroner John Owen said: "I hope it will become generally known that all these solid fuel appliances are perfectly safe if they're well maintained. If they become blocked they become very dangerous indeed.

"I trust others will make sure that their appliances are regularly serviced and cleaned and that their chimneys are kept in a good condition."

Post mortem examinations found carbon monoxide in the blood, well within the fatal range.

The couple's son Dewi Enoch said after the hearing: "I think people are aware to keep their chimney clean but it's important that the appliance is checked as well."

Story from BBC NEWS:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/wales/south_west/4226077.stm

Published: 2005/02/01 12:44:21 GMT

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Last Updated: Saturday, 13 October 2007, 09:41 GMT 10:41 UK

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Couples rescued from toxic fumes

Two elderly couples have been rescued after a carbon monoxide leak in a stove in a north Devon home.



Firefighters said the couples were 'incredibly lucky'

One man woke up feeling poorly and collapsed. Another man managed to call the emergency services before also collapsing at about 0400 BST.

High levels of carbon monoxide were later detected in the solid fuel stove at the house in Burrington, Umberleigh.

All four occupants were taken to hospital suffering from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning.

A spokesman for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service said the couples were "incredibly lucky".

Two fire engines, gas detection equipment and a hazardous material officer were called to the property.

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EDITORS' BLOG

Last Updated: Monday, 12 February 2007, 19:17 GMT

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Carbon monoxide fears over death

A man has died and his wife has been taken to hospital suffering from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning.



Ian Mackay alerted police after he was unable to contact his parents

Ambulance and fire crews were called to a house in Moorfield Drive in Armthorpe, Doncaster, on Sunday night.

Michael Mackay, 60, was found dead at the scene and his wife Patricia, who is in her late 50s, was taken to Doncaster Royal Infirmary.

The couple's son Ian called for carbon monoxide detectors to be made compulsory in every home.

He said: "I'm a biology teacher and I teach my sixth form students about carbon monoxide poisoning because they are going to be going to university next year and they are at risk.

"You don't think it's going to be your mum and dad that succumbs to it.

"Property laws should say that every house should have a smoke detector and a carbon monoxide detector particularly.

"I can't believe that people wouldn't have a carbon monoxide detector in their house, because you can't smell it, taste it, you don't know it's there. You just feel drowsy and then you don't wake up."

South Yorkshire Police are waiting for the results of a post mortem examination and toxicology tests.

A spokeswoman said there were no suspicious circumstances, but there was a smell of fumes at the scene.

A South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue spokeswoman said they believed the fumes had come from a solid fuel fire at the property.

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Killed by his new stove



'Best mate': Declan Oliver

Daily Mail Reporter

A TEENAGER who moved into a summerhouse in his parents' garden for more independence died from carbon monoxide poisoning from a wood-burning stove he and his father fitted, an inquest heard.

Declan Oliver, 19, installed the stove with his father Ian to heat the outbuilding that had become his home.

A week later he was found dead in his bed after deadly carbon monoxide leaked out.

The flue was the wrong length which meant it could not extract the poisonous gas properly and it leaked out through the front of the stove.

Mr Oliver, 54, said he was 'devas-

Teen overcome by fumes after he and his father fitted faulty flue

tated with guilt' and paid tribute to his son, whom he called his 'best mate'.

Declan, who worked for his father's car restoration business with his older brother Ben, 21, moved into the brick-built summerhouse 18 months before his



A Cottager 2 wood stove

death, but it was hard to heat in the winter.

In January this year he used money from a £2,800 lottery win to buy the £500 Cottager 2 cast iron stove.

Mr Oliver, from Morton, near Dorchester, Dorset, said: 'The reason we bought the wood burner was it seemed to be a safe, cheap form of heat, quite within the realms of DIY.'

The pair fitted the stove on January 31 following the manufacturer's instructions.

Mr Oliver told the inquest they did not have it checked by a qualified installer because the only warnings were for potential fire hazards, which he felt was 'common sense'.

He added there was no mention of carbon monoxide poisoning or the need for ventilation although it did urge consumers to comply with British regulations.

He said: 'In hindsight the instructions were not sufficient, but at the

time they enabled us to fit it. I asked Dec every morning if it was working well and asked if it was smoky and he said it was fine.

'He never complained of headaches or anything, if he had I'd have been suspicious straight away.'

Declan arrived home at 3.15am on Saturday, February 6, after a night out with friends. He was found at 8.45am with white foam around his nostrils and mouth.

His father and mother Jackie, a 49-year-old nurse, carried out mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until paramedics arrived, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mr Oliver said: 'I still can't understand it or believe it. I've lost my son, best mate and workmate.'

'We were so close, it makes it all so much harder.' He is now trying to

'Devastated with guilt'

warn others of the dangers from wood-burning stoves, about which he said there was 'total ignorance'.

He said: 'We can't bring him back, but if nothing else it would be good to raise awareness and hopefully save other lives.'

Recording an accident verdict, East Dorset coroner Sheriff Payne urged local authorities to demand greater legislation to combat carbon monoxide poisoning, which he said caused around five deaths a year.

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