



Site  Web

[Search](#)

Tuesday, 28th July 2009

## Firm fined in deadly bug scare



Kepak at Walton Summit

[« Previous](#)

[« Previous](#)

[Next »](#)

[Next »](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

**Published Date:** 27 July 2009

A meat processing firm has been fined £25,000 for an outbreak of a potentially deadly bug which left two workers in hospital.

Two Polish employees contracted Legionnaires' disease while working at Kepak UK Ltd in Walton Summit, near Preston, in September 2006.

The firm, which supplied meat to major supermarkets including Tesco, must also pay £20,000 costs after it pleaded guilty to failing to ensure the health and safety of employees by failing to protect them from contracting Legionnaire's from a domestic water system.

The bug, a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, was spread into the air via a jet pressure washer used for cleaning at the meat-boning plant in Carr Place, which employed 50 people at the time.

One of the Polish men needed a "significant period" off work and has since returned to Poland after receiving compensation from Kepak.

The second man was off sick for three days and had returned to work for a time, but was thought to be taking civil action last year against the firm, the court heard.

Prosecuting, Kate Blackwell told Preston Crown Court that a contractor had undertaken a safety assessment at the Walton Summit premises in 2001, but that the assessment had not been reviewed by the time of the legionella outbreak five years later.

She said the problem came from a hot water feed into the pressure washer and that water had probably stagnated, multiplying the bug, over a warm weekend when the washer was not in use.

The court heard that the outbreak could have potentially affected other workers but that Kepak had acted quickly to contain the spread of the disease.

The firm voluntarily agreed to shut down the Walton Summit plant, which mainly processed lamb and beef, to allow an initial health and safety investigation and ensured other workers were screened for the bug.

Alistair Webster QC, on behalf of Kepak, said they had never suffered an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in its 28 years of operating in the UK.

He said: "Kepak accepts the breach of statutory duty but it needs to be put into context.

"These are not employers who are cavalier with the health of their employees or the public.

"They did their best to mitigate the consequences and ensure no further infection was suffered by any employees."

Fining Kepak, judge Stuart Baker accepted the firm had not been "cavalier" in its attitude to health and safety to save money, but that it had failed to sufficiently review its risk assessments over five years.

[>> Vote in our latest web poll](#)

lepbusiness: News from the Lancashire business community

Page 1 of 1

- **Last Updated:** 27 July 2009 3:19 PM
- **Source:** n/a
- **Location:** Preston

**Ads by Google**

**[Legionnaires' Outbreak](#)**

Recognized Experts Address Issues Quickly, Safely & Cost Effectively  
[www.legionellae.org](http://www.legionellae.org)

**[Pressure Washer](#)**

Exterior Power Washing - Free Est. Low Price Guarantee - Call Now.  
[www.AllBriteWeb.com](http://www.AllBriteWeb.com)

**[Hydroblasting Cleaners](#)**

Industrial Pressure Cleaning Services. Located in Farmington NM.  
[H2Oblasting.com](http://H2Oblasting.com)



This website and its associated newspaper adheres to the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice. If you have a complaint about editorial content which relates to inaccuracy or intrusion, then contact the Editor by

clicking [here](#).

If you remain dissatisfied with the response provided then you can contact the PCC by clicking [here](#).

