



News Release

22 November 2004

FOOD FIRM FINED FOR BLOCKING SEWER WITH FAT

A food firm in Stratford, east London, has been prosecuted for repeatedly causing a local sewer to become blocked with fat.

Ambala Foods Limited, which produces sweets, savouries and pickles, was found by Stratford Magistrates Court to have exceeded limits set by Thames Water to regulate the amount of fat and oil it pours down the drains.

The court heard on Thursday (18 November) how the public sewer serving the area became blocked on several occasions over a four-year period. In January of this year, sewage, fat and grease flooded out of a manhole on to a nearby footpath off Blaker Road. The company, which admitted the offence, was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £2,866 in costs.

Thames Water brought the prosecution, after tests showed the level of fat and oil in wastewater entering the sewers from the firm's production line was more than nine times the permitted amount.

Water companies set limits on the fat and oil content of the wastewater that commercial premises discharge to the public sewer system.

Ambala Foods Limited, which is based in Bridgewater Road, has agreed to install an effluent treatment plant at its premises, to ensure the problem cannot recur.

Tony McHattie, Thames Water's Trade Effluent Manager, said: "Prosecutions of this sort are rare, and used only as a last resort when a trader fails to respond to correspondence, meetings and repeated warnings.

"Fat and oil poured down the drains causes more sewer blockages than any other factor, and can lead to sewer floods and environmental pollution.

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“We are keen to work with firms to help them meet the limits we set for fat and oil discharges – but are prepared to take the matter to the courts if they disregard their obligations and do not co-operate.”

Thames Water estimates that over 1,000 tonnes of cooking fat, from both commercial and domestic properties, is swilled down its 42,000-mile sewer network each year. Annually the company spends approximately £7 million clearing around 100,000 blockages from public sewers, around half of which are caused by fat.

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For further information, please contact Thames Water’s press office: Chris Shipway on 0118 373 8924 or Christopher.shipway@thameswater.co.uk