



R B F & R S

news release

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RESTAURANT OWNER FINED FOR SERIOUS FIRE SAFETY BREACHES

The owner of the Wu Tang Chinese restaurant in the Colonnade, Maidenhead, Wu Si Qiang, was fined £7,000 and ordered to pay £5,000 costs at Reading Crown Court on Thursday (18 December), for failure to comply with fire safety regulations.

Mr Wu Si Qiang had earlier admitted to 14 separate charges of placing persons at serious risk of death or serious injury from fire, at Maidenhead Magistrates Court on 5 September this year. The case was deemed sufficiently serious by the Magistrates to be adjourned to the Crown Court for sentencing. The charges related to failure to comply with fire safety regulations contained within the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2006.

The prosecution was brought following a fire in the basement at the Wu Tang restaurant on 14 March 2007. It took firefighters nearly an hour to bring the fire under control. Fire safety officers found that the basement was being used as sleeping accommodation for up to 11 staff members. There were no fire alarms or fire protection measures provided for the basement escape route. The only exit route from the basement was an improvised staircase.

In addition, there was no fire risk assessment in place, no firefighting equipment, no emergency lighting in the basement, no fire detection in the bedrooms of the premises and the fire escape routes were obstructed.

Mr Wu Si Qiang was fined £500 for each offence, a total of £7,000 and also ordered to pay £5,000 towards prosecution costs. He was given two years to pay the fine and faces up to six months in prison if he fails to do so.

David Walden, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Safety Technical Support Manager, said: "We welcome the clear message sent out from the Crown Court that business owners will be held accountable in law for the fire-related safety of staff and customers on their premises.

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“The fire at this property could all too easily have resulted in the deaths of many people, including firefighters.

“Although fire and rescue services are no longer required to issue fire safety certificates, we continue to carry out a rigorous inspection programme of commercial premises to ensure they are meeting the standards required by the Order.

“Everyone who employs staff or has responsibility and control of commercial premises has this responsibility. The Fire Authority has a statutory duty to protect members of the public by enforcing the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2006.”

ENDS.