

Lead Acid Battery Plant, Midlands, UK

5 Ha site closed in 2003. Sale of site negotiated by closing organisation to developer. Closing organisation responsible for removal of equipment, materials and waste prior to sale completion. Proposed to use existing (soon to be redundant) workforce to carry out work. However large scale machinery required significant structural dismantling and a specialist demolition company had to be brought in to do this. Wastes included large volumes of lead oxide paste and this was handled by site workforce trained in handling this material and under long term health screening.

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Problems:

- Timescales dictated by land sale not required work scope
- Scope of pre closure works not appreciated: significant volumes of lead oxide paste and major machinery items needed removal before completion of sale.
- Third parties removing items of machinery sold by closing organisation created extra health and safety risks
- Skill set of site workforce engaged in closure works not sufficient to complete structural dismantling of large plant
- Site workforce demotivated as they were losing their jobs
- Challenges in co-ordinating site workforce and specialist dismantling contractor – different working cultures
- Interaction of lead at work laws and construction (CDM) laws

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Adverse Consequences:

- Complex works co-ordination task for closing organisation, significant management attention
- Several challenges for health and safety management
- As a result, high regulatory interest – full HSE unannounced inspection took place
- Increase in cost for closure, mitigated by increase in scrap reclaim value and by land sale receipts
