



SUBJECT: GO TO JAIL – DO NOT PASS GO!

RECIPIENTS: All Services – Including Schools

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Construction boss jailed for 14 months over London balcony deaths

A director has been jailed and his refit company fined more than £1m after two workers fell to their deaths as they hauled a heavy sofa into a luxury west London flat.

The Director was sentenced to 14 months in prison and disqualified from being a company director for four years. He was found guilty of breaching s 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work (HSW) Act at the Old Bailey and the company fined £1.2m after it was previously convicted of two counts of corporate manslaughter and two breaches of s 2(1) of the HSW Act.



Two Polish nationals were part of a team of construction workers that was renovating the flat in Cadogan Square, Belgravia. On 21 November 2014, five workmen used a rope to lift the 115 kg sofa up from the pavement and over a balustrade into the first-floor dwelling because it was too big to be carried up the stairs.

The 130-year-old balcony railings gave way while the furniture was being manoeuvred into the premises and both men fell. One was pronounced dead at the scene; the second was taken to a central London hospital in a critical condition but died a short while later.

The workers had not been provided with a plan, risk assessment or method statement for the lifting work. Advice from a reputable lifting company on how to carry out the process safely was ignored due to time constraints as the project was behind schedule by the time the sofa was delivered.

It was reported that the couch could have been safely transported into the flat in an elevator that would have cost £848 but the Director rejected the recommendation because his workers “do not have time for all that”. The company’s annual turnover was £9.7m before it went into liquidation in August 2016. Crown Prosecution Service said previously that the Director had “showed an appalling disregard for the safety of employees, with terrible consequences. The evidence put forward by the prosecution clearly demonstrated to the jury how these tragic deaths were part of a pattern of serious neglect of basic health and safety.”

If you require further assistance or clarification on the subject please contact:

Corporate Health & Safety Advisers (see George section: Corporate > Information for Working > Risk Management > H&S Adviser)