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Government Regulations Fail to Address Growing Threat to Public from Shattered Shop, Restaurant and Office Windows

Business Owners and Landlords Could be Held Liable for Injuries
 30 Nov 2009

London – November 24th, 2009 – CCTV footage shows an internal window of a Chinese restaurant in Basildon inexplicably shattering, covering dozens of diners, including children, with glass. Stunned city workers cheat death when fragments of a pane of glass fall 17 stories narrowly missing those walking in Old Broad Street below. A man dies after being injured by the shopfront glass after throwing a woman through the window of a well-known high street store in the West End.

These three incidences, all within a five mile radius, took place between June and August of this year. However, the danger posed by the glass in each of the instances cited above was possibly avoidable had government regulations been followed.

In 1992 Health, Safety and Welfare Regulation 14 came into force, requiring that "every window or other transparent or translucent surface in a wall, partition, door or gate should, where necessary for reasons of health or safety, be of a safety material or be protected against breakage of the transparent or translucent material; and be appropriately marked or incorporate features to make it apparent." This regulation applies to a wide range of workplaces including offices, shops, schools, hospitals, hotels and places of entertainment. Despite this, reported incidents of glass breakage are on the rise.

Ian Penfold, Chairman for the Applied Window Film Group, Glass and Glazing Federation, explains the scale of the problem: "The use of glass in offices, restaurants and shops is on the increase as architects seek to bring natural environmental factors into the interior of buildings by making the most of natural daylight. This is typically achieved through the use of larger glazed areas in facades and roofs and, in some instances, through entirely glazed facades where the glass is a structural component of the building."

Andy Macdonald, Contracts Director of window film specialist firm Lustalux, said: "With the increased use of glass in our environment comes the increased risk of injury to members of the public. Most people are aware that falling, flying or otherwise static broken glass can cause extreme injuries. Yet they also think such incidents are rare and are typically caused by vandalism, terrorism or accident."

The consequences of breakage get even more severe where the glass is installed overhead or in public areas such as in high-rise buildings. Whatever the cause of breakage, protection from this hazard can be increased by the application of a safety window film and in some cases an edge retention system to the glass, preventing it from shattering in a dangerous manner.

Penfold concluded: "It's unclear how many shops and offices in our cities have taken steps to comply with Regulation 14, despite the clear guidelines stating what must be done. Business owners and landlords who don't comply could face significant legal consequences if their employees, customers or even passers-by are injured from broken, falling or flying glass from their properties."

About Solar Gard®



Solar Gard window film is manufactured by Bekaert Specialty Films LLC., www.bekaertfilms.com, a global leader in the development, manufacture and distribution of specialty films for use as solar control and safety window films and for industrial applications. The company delivers solutions for safety, security, glare, energy savings and CO2 emission reduction through a network of independent certified dealers and distributors in more than 60 countries under the Solar Gard®, Panorama®, Quantum® and Solar Gard® Armorcoat® brands. Bekaert Specialty Films also manufactures industrial films for photovoltaic, electronics, medical, graphic arts and imaging, automotive and aerospace industries. ISO 14001:2004 certified, the company is the first in the industry to certify its carbon footprint, is a Climate Action Leader and is committed to environmental responsibility. Headquartered in San Diego, CA, Bekaert Specialty Films LLC is a subsidiary of the Bekaert group (Euronext Brussels: BEKB), a global company headquartered in Belgium with annual combined sales of €4 billion, more than \$5 billion.

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