

London borough council fined after child sustains fatal injuries at playground

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council has been sentenced after a five-year-old girl died when playground equipment collapsed on top of her at Mile End Park.

Westminster Magistrates' Court heard that on 17 July 2015, Alexia Walenkaki was swinging on a rope attached at one end to a wooden post, when the play equipment gave way. The post snapped at its base causing the wooden structure to collapse on top of her. She sustained fatal head injuries.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council had failed to ensure that an annual playground safety check was carried out. Investigators also found the post was made from wood that was unsuitable and had decayed.

The local authority had previously implemented a system of inspections to ensure that play equipment was safe to use. However, the play equipment at Mile End Park had not been inspected by a playground inspector since September 2013. If the equipment had been inspected and tested for signs of rot, the risk may have been identified and appropriate action taken to remove and replace the equipment.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974. They were fined £330,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,204.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stephron Baker Holmes said: "Those who provide play equipment should ensure it is safe for children. The lack of a suitable playground inspection in the period leading up to this incident has resulted in tragic consequences."

Further information regarding health and safety guidance for leisure activities can be found here:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/leisure/useful-links.htm>

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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