



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

## Occupational Health & Safety - GREEN ALERT Free standing lockers topple and fatally injure schoolboy

Issue reference: OHS0134

Date of issue: 26/07/2021



### Applicable to Premise Managers

A high school has been fined after a young child died when a locker in a changing room fell on top of him. The child was fatally injured when he attended an after-school swimming lesson at the sports centre of the school. The incident occurred whilst he and another young child had been waiting in the boy's changing room for their lesson to start. The lockers, which had doors missing, stood prominently in the changing area provided a climbing frame to the children. As they climbed on the front of the unit it toppled forward. One child was able to jump free but tragically the other could not and the locker fell on top of him.

The HSE's investigation found that the locker unit, which was 180cm tall and weighed 188kg, had not been secured to the wall to prevent it from toppling over despite the unit having fixing brackets fitted as part of its structure. The court was told that several scenarios could have caused the unit to move including an adult stepping onto the lowest edge of the unit to pull at a bag stuck in a top tier locker or to clean the top the unit.

The school pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £16,700 with costs of £12,000.

After the hearing HSE inspector said: "This tragic incident led to the avoidable death of a young child which has, and will continue to, deeply affect his loving family, his friends and acquaintances. This incident could easily have been prevented had the school simply ensured the locker unit had been securely fixed to the wall, however it had failed to identify the risk associated with the potential for

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the unit to topple over and to put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that it stayed secure.

“At the inquest into the child’s death, the jury agreed that this tragedy was significantly contributed to by a lack of appropriate assessment to a clear and obvious risk. I therefore urge all organisations to urgently check that any free-standing furniture is appropriately assessed and properly secured, if they have not done so already.”

### **Key actions required for Managers:**

1. Check all free-standing furniture is properly secured and whether it poses any risk.
2. Ensure workplace inspections and subsequent maintenance is completed.

Should you require any further information or support in implementing the requirements of this alert please contact your [Health & Safety Team](#)

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<b>Traffic light key</b>	
<b>Red alerts</b>	Mandatory - where immediate action may be required
<b>Amber alerts</b>	Mandatory - with a timescale for action that may be required.
<b>Green alerts</b>	Information only