

Bolton lift shaft death fall: Company fined £120,000

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Image caption The court heard Craig Jones was among a number of residents who had been forced to resort to "self rescue" when the lift broke down

A building management company has been fined £120,000 after the death of a man who fell down a lift shaft.

Craig Jones, 27, fell about five floors down the shaft after the lift broke down in Marsden House in Bolton town centre in August 2014.

He had "lost his footing" after an item of clothing caught on something while he tried to climb out, a court heard.

Warwick Estates Property Management admitted breaching health and safety regulations at Bolton Crown Court.

'Self rescue'

The court was told the lift had broken down on several previous occasions.

There was also an intermittent problem with the emergency call system meaning it did not always connect and there was no mobile phone signal.

On 30 August 2014, Mr Jones and his friend had pressed the alarm button after becoming stuck between floor four and five but the emergency call out had not been activated.

Other people who lived in the apartment block reported they had also sought "self rescue" after being stuck in the lift previously, the court heard.

Judge Clayton said the problems were "unaddressed for a substantial period of time" and this meant it was a "serious accident waiting to happen".



Image captionSpeaking outside court, Craig Jones' mother, Samantha, said her son had "no other choice" but try to get out of the lift



Image caption Mr Jones and his friend had become trapped in the lift in Marsden House when it broke down on the way to his apartment

The firm had, the judge said, failed to ensure lift systems were maintained adequately and failed to ensure it received maintenance reports.

The company admitted it had failed to query the absence of reports relating to the lifts on five occasions.

If it had done so, "serious faults" would have been identified, the judge said.

'Avoidable'

Speaking after the sentencing, Mr Jones' mother Samantha said she felt "comforted" as the judge had made clear "Craig's death was completely unnecessary and avoidable and should not have happened and that Craig was in no way at fault or to blame".

"He had no choice and that has been shown clearly now."

Ms Jones added: "[My son] had his whole life in front of him and it was taken away by incompetence."

Warwick Estates Property Management was also ordered to pay £45,000 costs.