Friday, 15 November, 2002, 18:36 GMT

Firms fined over scaffolding collapse

The scaffolding fell onto the city centre street

Two building firms have been fined £320,000 after 30 tonnes of scaffolding crashed from a multi-storey building in Cardiff city centre.

Cardiff Crown Court heard the collapse happened in winds gusting at 87 miles per hour in the run-up to Christmas two years ago.

A "major catastrophe" was avoided only because the street was deserted after midnight.

Judge Roderick Denyer QC said it was a matter of mere good fortune that no-one was killed or injured.

Police watched on CCTV cameras as the scaffolding crumbled around the 12-storey former AA office building at the end of Queen Street in Cardiff's city centre.

The court was shown a video of police footage of the collapse just after midnight on 13 December, 2000 - hours after the street was packed with busy Christmas shoppers.

The building was under conversion into luxury apartments at the time by building firm Taylor Woodrow.

Workmen had to cut some of the scaffolding

Untrained workers

The court heard that the scaffolding should have withstood the storm, but 70 per cent of the ties to hold it in place were never put in place.

The remainder of the ties came away from the building because they were not screwed into the building far enough, prosecutor Bryan Thomas told the court.
He said it was "an accident waiting to happen" because it was built by untrained workers using the wrong equipment.

Taylor Woodrow Construction and contractors RMD Kwikform Limited admitted breaching the Health and Safety Act by not properly installing and inspecting the 12 storeys of scaffolding.

RMD was fined £240,000 for four health and safety offences, and Taylor Woodrow was fined £80,000 for one offence.

Endangered lives

The court was told RMD Kwikform installed the scaffolding at the former AA building in Queen Street, which was being refurbished into plush apartments, now called The Aspect.

The site was run by Taylor Woodrow, who, according to Mr Thomas, did not carry out inspections of the scaffolding.

Defending Taylor Woodrow, Nicholas David Jones said the company accepted what it had done but had not deliberately endangered lives.

Ian Bullock, for RMD Kwikform, said the company would make sure it never happened again.

© BBC © MMIII | News Sources | Privacy