

999

SECURITY AND SAFETY FOR ALL

ISSUE 122 MARCH 2022

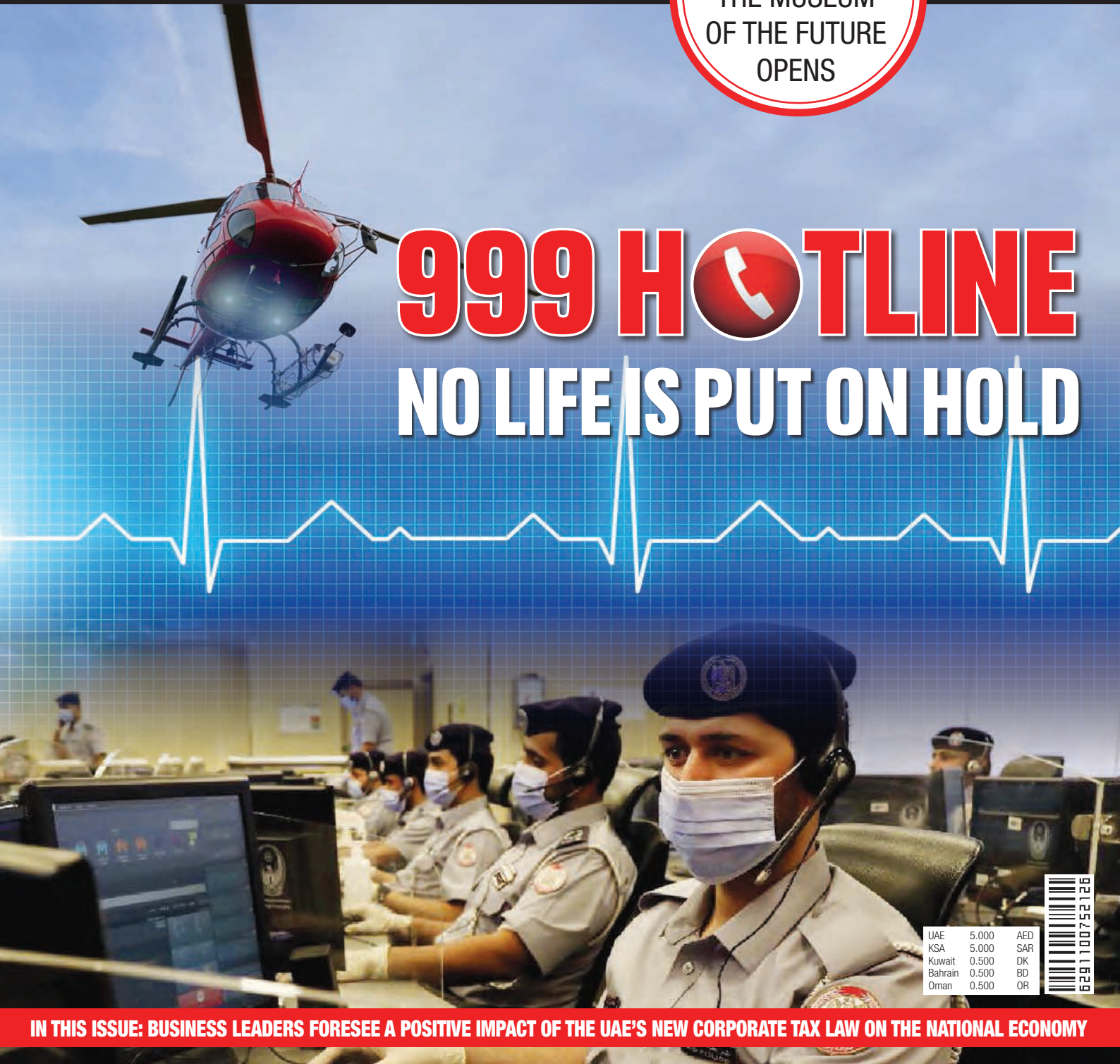
THE LEGACIES
OF EXPO 2020
DUBAI

CHILD FALL
ACCIDENTS &
SOLUTIONS

IN THE
SPOTLIGHT:
THE MUSEUM
OF THE FUTURE
OPENS

999 HOTLINE

NO LIFE IS PUT ON HOLD



UAE	5.000	AED
KSA	5.000	SAR
Kuwait	0.500	DK
Bahrain	0.500	BD
Oman	0.500	OR



IN THIS ISSUE: BUSINESS LEADERS FORESEE A POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE UAE'S NEW CORPORATE TAX LAW ON THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

FATAL FALL

A SINGLE DAY LAST FEBRUARY SAW THE DEATHS OF THREE CHILDREN IN THE UAE AS THEY PLUNGED FROM HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS. THESE TRAGEDIES BRING THE SPOTLIGHT BACK TO THIS RECURRING PROBLEM, AND **999** LOOKS AT THE SOLUTIONS

BY ANDY WILSON



No one ever thinks that an accident or tragedy could happen to them. Those only ever happen to other people, right? That's the first big mistake people make. In reality, accidents can happen to everyone, especially to young children who don't fully understand the risk of their actions and surroundings. It's the responsibility of their parents or guardians to keep them safe.

In the UAE, where city skylines are dotted with high-rise buildings, one of the chief risks to children is a fall from one of the higher floors — that's an accident that inevitably ends in a tragedy.

The date 2.2.22 was a black day for several UAE families, as three deaths of children who fell from high-rise apartment buildings were reported on the same day, from two different emirates. In Sharjah, a five-year-old child fell to his death from the 22nd floor of a residential building in the Al Majaz area. In another incident that day, a 10-year-old kid fell from the 32nd floor of a residential tower in Al Wahda Street. Then, in Fujairah, an eight-year-old child fell from the 12th floor of a building.

Three such cases reported on the same day seem like a ghastly coincidence, but what's more to the point is that children falling to their death from high-rise buildings isn't new. The UAE authorities have been relentlessly campaigning to make parents and other family members aware of precautions to take if they have young children at home.

The inattention of family members — and the resultant deaths — is so common that when the UAE introduced a new child protection law, also called the "Wadeema Law", Article 35 of the law specified that parents whose children fell to their death from high-rise apartments would face penal action. Article 60 of the law stipulates fines of Dhs5,000 and a jail term of not less than a year for parents who neglect their children.

Immediately after the incidents on February 2, 2022, Colonel Sami Al Naqbi, Director General of Sharjah Civil Defence, urged families to prevent such deaths. He said, "Children must not be left anywhere near windows or balconies unaccompanied by parents or adult family members under any circumstances, in order to avoid tragic incidents of children falling off high-rise buildings."

STATS ON CHILD DEATHS

Data from global real estate research company Emporis show that Abu Dhabi has 1,139 high-rise buildings and 103 skyscrapers; Dubai has 1,588 high-rise buildings and 584 skyscrapers; and Sharjah has 419 high-rise buildings and 77 skyscrapers. Many of these buildings are residential and, collectively, they're occupied by hundreds of families with children under 10 years of age.

According to a media report published in 2015, the UAE had seen more than 30 child deaths caused by falls from high-rise buildings in the previous 10 years. These children all fell from apartment windows or balconies.

A nationwide survey conducted in 2017 by the Institute of Public Health — College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Al Ain, that was published in the World Journal of Emergency Surgery, showed that during

“Children must not be left anywhere near windows or balconies unaccompanied by parents or adult family members under any circumstances, in order to avoid tragic incidents of children falling off high-rise buildings”



COLONEL SAMI AL NAQBI

Director General of Sharjah Civil Defence



the period 2005-2016, around 81 per cent of the children who had fallen from heights in the UAE did not survive, underscoring the need for prevention.

The survey also found that 53 per cent of the falls involved boys with the mean age of 4.9 years. Of the total number, 47 per cent fell from windows; 44 per cent from balconies; and 9 per cent from unidentified areas of the buildings. The maximum number of falls were in Sharjah (39), followed by Abu Dhabi (16), Dubai (10), Ajman (9), Fujairah (4) and Ras Al Khaimah (2), it added.

As for how and why the children fell, the study said that 22 children (27 per cent of the sample population) “climbed on the furniture placed on a balcony or close to a window”; 25 children (31 per cent of the sample population) “were not alone in the apartment when they fell”; 29 children (37 per cent) “fell from less than

5 floors”; 33 children (42 per cent) “from 5 to 10 floors”; and 16 children (21 per cent) “from more than 10 floors”.

On the consequences of the fall, the survey said that 15 children (19 per cent) “were hospitalised and survived the fall incident” and that 66 children (81 per cent) died.

Lead author of the study Professor Michal Grivna, Director of the Institute of Public Health – College of Medicine and Health Sciences at UAE University, said: “Child falls from windows and balconies are preventable. Despite many efforts by the UAE authorities to enforce window and balcony safety regulations, falls do occur. There is a challenge with the turnover of the expatriate community, which needs to be constantly educated about safety risks and importance of vigilance.”

Meanwhile, a paper published by the

SMALL STEPS SAVE LIVES



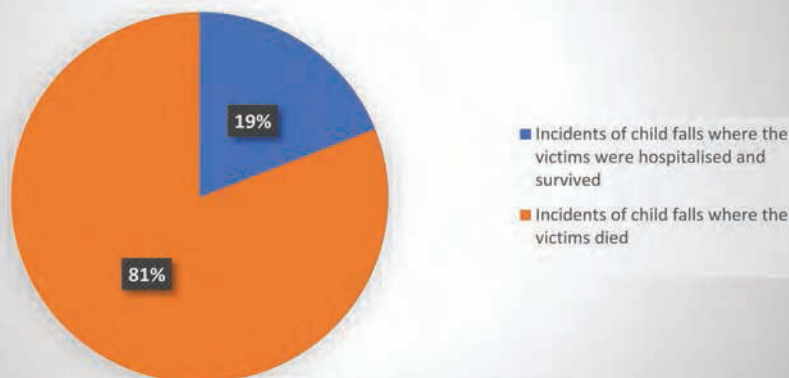
Codes and regulations alone cannot prevent falls and accidents involving balconies, windows, railings, and terraces. Therefore, awareness of dangers caused by human negligence (parents and guardians) is of high importance, especially in these times of high-rise living and working spaces, according to the UAE Fire & Life Safety Code of Practice.

Here are a few small steps that can save lives:

- Never leave children, people of determination, and elderly people unattended and unsupervised at the balconies, near windows, railings, and on terraces.
- Never keep furniture, bedding, or climbable objects near windows, balconies, railings, and terraces that can be translated into a ‘ladder’ by innocent and unwary children.
- Always lock access to terraces, balconies, railings, and window panes when children and people of determination are left unattended.

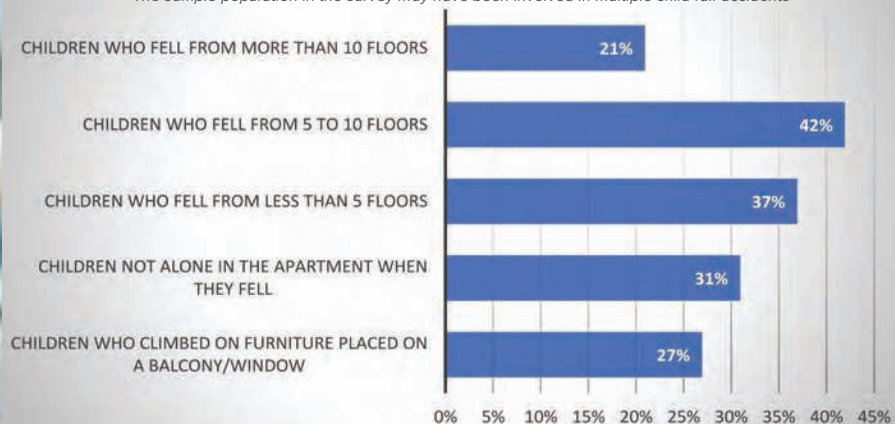
Source: UAE Fire & Life Safety Code of Practice

INJURIES AND FATALITIES IN CHILD FALL CASES IN UAE



REASONS FOR CHILD FALL ACCIDENTS IN UAE

*The sample population in the survey may have been involved in multiple child fall accidents



Source: 2017 study of the Institute of Public Health – College of Medicine and Health Sciences at UAE University

American Academy for Pediatrics stressed that numerous factors contributed to fall injuries — these include neurological disorders, such as seizures, developmental delay, hyperactivity, and parental neglect.

MEASURES IN PLACE

A few years ago, Thabit Al Turaifi, Director General of Sharjah City

“We are keen to find radical solutions to the problem of accidents involving children in high-rise buildings. This can be done in coordination with government agencies, to safeguard the community, which is one of our priorities



THABIT AL TURAIIFI

Director General of Sharjah City Municipality

Municipality, said, “We are keen to find radical solutions to the problem of accidents involving children in high-rise buildings. This can be done in coordination with government agencies, to safeguard the community, which is one of our priorities.”

In a presentation given by Sharjah Municipality, the main factors behind children falling off buildings were: negligence by parents; stocking furniture and other objects on balconies and near windows; and leaving windows open.

In order to check these mishaps, the Sharjah government introduced preventive measures and amended the technical requirements for residential windows and balconies. The measures included increasing the height of windows and balconies to 1.2 metres, instead of 1 metre; installing safety locks to prevent windows from opening more than 5 to 10 centimetres wide; using railings that children cannot climb over; and putting up a translucent acrylic barrier on balcony railings after getting municipality permit.

Some parents are trying to keep their children safe by renting apartments whose design minimises the risk of falling. Mariam, a mother of two boys and an 18-month-old girl, opted to rent an apartment without a balcony on the 10th floor in a tower on the Abu Dhabi Corniche. “I have three kids, all of them are below five [years of age]. They’re quite eager to know their surroundings

“Despite many efforts by the UAE authorities to enforce window and balcony safety regulations, falls do occur. The expatriate community needs to be constantly educated about safety risks and the importance of vigilance



PROF MICHAL GRIVNA

Director of the Institute of Public Health – College of Medicine and Health Sciences at UAE University

and three of them often stand near the window to look out. We had thought about this before and so, as a precaution, we chose to take an apartment without a balcony. Though we don’t have the Corniche view, we still are close to the Corniche and can take our kids for a stroll in the evenings.”

Natasha, mother of an eight-year-old girl, said, “We stay in this mid-rise building, which is far safer for my kid. But we still ensure that our living room and bedroom windows are locked properly at all times.”

SELFIES CAN BE FATAL, TOO

Not only is there a need for young children to be protected, but families also need to take into account the risk-prone behaviour of teenagers, who may disregard their safety for social media fame. In October 2019, a 16-year-old girl fell to her death from the 17th floor of a building off Sheikh Zayed Road while she was trying to take a selfie for her social media pages.

Colonel Faisal Al Qasim, Director of Security Media in Dubai Police, said that the girl had stood on a chair placed at the edge of the balcony — that means she was well above the guard rail and there was nothing to stop her fall. “Her sister said that she lost her balance (while standing) on a chair and fell off the balcony, while her mobile dramatically fell inside the balcony. The girl was killed instantly,” said Al Qasim.



Indeed, city-bred teenagers in many countries consider high-rises the perfect place for clicking a thrilling selfie. Their appetite for these selfies is whetted by social media pages of urban climbers, i.e. people who climb high-rise buildings as if they’re mountains to be scaled; and of course, they also photograph these acts.

What they don’t realise is that a moment’s mistake could change their status from ‘alive’ to ‘dead’. It’s imperative

BALCONY & WINDOWS SAFETY



The UK-based charity Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) warned parents to keep low furniture away from windows so that young children can't climb up and fall out — this is even for the ground floor. "It's a good idea to install window catches (to limit how far they can open) and locks, if you can," it advised. Pre-school children are particularly susceptible to falls from a height as they're curious and want to see what's happening outside but have no real understanding of danger.

"They can take parents by surprise by a sudden breakthrough in their development. You think they don't climb but, before you know it, they can clamber up on furniture or haul their toy box across the floor and open a window. And accidents can happen very quickly when your back is turned or you're distracted for a minute," said CAPT.

It recommends the following:

- 🟡 Fit window locks or safety catches to stop windows opening more than 6.5 centimetres, which will stop children from being able to squeeze through.
- 🟡 Move furniture such as beds and chairs away from windows to stop children climbing up and falling out.
- 🟡 Keep younger children away from balconies unless parents are with them.
- 🟡 Keep balcony doors locked when not in use.
- 🟡 There should be a barrier at least 110 centimetres high around the edge of the balcony in order to make sure children are safe.
- 🟡 If the gaps between the upright railings are more than 6.5 centimetres, cover them up.

Source: Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)

for families to impress upon these young adults that there's no heroism, nothing 'cool' about dying for a pointless photograph.

MAKE A SAFETY PLAN

To prevent a fall, first assess the threats. Take a look at your apartment, the windows and balcony, and think what could harm your child, and how they could get out of the windows or onto the

balcony when they're unattended. By doing this, you should be able to identify potential hazards that must be eliminated.

Then, plan what you could do to stop them from falling. Your overall safety plan should have two phases: one, preventing access; and two, preventing a fall.

For phase one, i.e. "preventing access", remove anything that can give your child access to a window and help them climb up, such as a piece of furniture or the

position of their crib next to a window. To stop them accessing an open balcony, consider putting up child gates in front of the balcony doors.

For phase two, i.e. "preventing a fall", consider covering the windows your child could potentially access with grills. If you live in a rented apartment, where you're not allowed to make any modifications to the window, consider using window nets that can be put up

easily with adhesive strips. Though not as solid a barrier as a grill, the mesh could still prevent a small child from falling; at the very least, it may give a parent time to react and pull the child back.

For your balcony, block any gaps in

the railing that your child could fall through. Then, line the inside of the balcony with an unclimbable barrier, such as clear plastic or reinforced glass, so that you can still enjoy your views but make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for your child to climb up

and over the edge. Ensure you never put your balcony furniture close to the edge. To be extra-careful, put a very small child in a harness while they're playing on the balcony. It may seem odd at first, but remember, harnessed is much better than dead.

FALLING INTO THE DEPTHS



Moroccan child Rayan Oram taken out of 32 meters deep well

The North African nation of Morocco grieved in early February 2022 for little Rayan Oram, who fell into the depths. The five-year-old boy slipped into a well 32 metres deep, remained stuck there for days, and didn't ultimately survive despite a rescue mission that was watched by millions on television.

The community of Iggran, a village in a mountainous area in northern Morocco, assembled along the edges of the well, and stayed there for days. Alongside Rayan's family, the villagers all prayed for the child's safety deep down in the well, where he was trapped. The villagers cheered on the rescue volunteers who tried to reach the boy. The entire nation,

too, watched the rescue mission through TV news and social media videos.

Experts in the fields of topographical engineering, construction, and rescue were called upon for help. A parallel ditch and a horizontal tunnel towards the well were excavated using bulldozers to reach the trapped boy.

But when Rayan was finally pulled out after a painstaking five-day operation, he was dead. A statement from the Moroccan royal court saddened the world: "Following the tragic accident which cost the life of the child Rayan Oram, HM King Mohammed VI called the parents of the boy who died after falling down the well."

As the news of his death spread,

messages of grief for Rayan and his family poured in from around the world. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, offered his condolences to Rayan's family. His message: "Our sincere condolences and sympathy to the family of the child Rayan and to the brotherly Moroccan nation and to all humanity that grieved for his loss."

The small village where Rayan lived was reportedly dotted with wells, which are being used by roughly 500 residents to irrigate their crops. Most of these wells have a protective cover, but the water shaft where Rayan fell was an exception.