

CASE STUDY – A FATAL RESTRAINT

Introduction

We know that the majority of door supervisors do a good job, often in the most demanding circumstances. However, door supervisors must remember to look for every opportunity to de-escalate conflict situations - even when under pressure, such as when dealing with abusive customers. Physical intervention should only be used as a last resort. All staff involved in an incident requiring physical intervention have a responsibility to keep everyone safe.

SIA physical intervention training is very clear about avoiding high risk methods of restraint, such as neck and other holds, particularly on the ground, that can adversely affect breathing or circulation. Despite this, incidents still take place in which people are seriously injured or even killed. Nobody goes to work with the intention of killing someone. However, unsafe restraint techniques could result in a security operative being responsible for a death or injury that could have a life-changing impact not just on the victim but on the perpetrator themselves, their family, and their friends.

We've produced this case study to help door supervisors, their employers, and also venues, to recognise how they can better protect themselves and others by reducing the need for physical intervention and to encourage appropriate training and safe practice.



A fatal restraint



The fight

A fight broke out in an alleyway near a night club. It escalated into several people throwing punches, at which point door supervisors from a number of nearby venues intervened to break up the fights. During this intervention, Jackson (not his real name), is alleged to have thrown a punch at a door supervisor. The door supervisor restrained Jackson on the floor with support from a colleague.



The restraint

Witness accounts vary, but the coroner's verdict found that one door supervisor had restrained Jackson in an unsafe manner, by making contact with his neck. Another door supervisor was responsible for Jackson's midriff, and a third door supervisor assisted for a period of time by restraining Jackson's legs and feet. They kept Jackson under restraint until his body went motionless.



The result

On realising this, the door supervisors checked Jackson's breathing and pulse and found them to be weak. They put him into the recovery position and called paramedics.

Jackson then stopped breathing and went into cardiac arrest. Paramedics arrived at the scene and started CPR. Jackson was taken to hospital and remained under sedation for several days. The hospital eventually told Jackson's family that he would not survive, and they took the decision to turn off his life support.

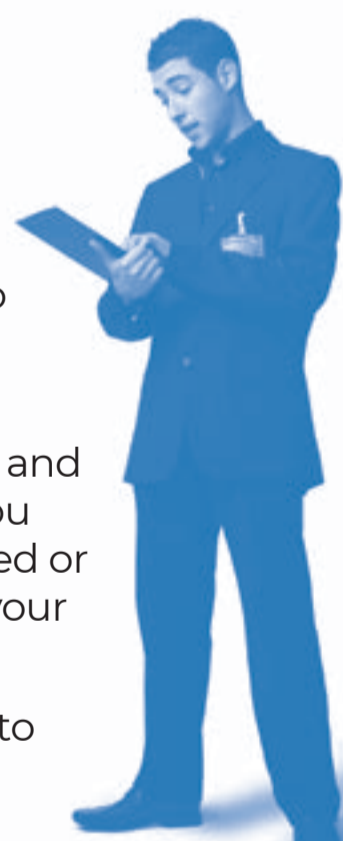


The outcome

The coroner wrote that Jackson died 'due to the fact that he was restrained in an inappropriate manner after behaving aggressively in a public place whilst being intoxicated. There was a delay before he received the urgent medical treatment he required, during which time he suffered irreversible hypoxic brain damage'.

Lessons to learn

- ✓ As part of managing the health and safety of your business, you must assess and control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people, and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.
- ✓ If you are a venue owner or a security provider you should conduct a risk assessment of the workplace and its functions at least once a year. This is to ensure you can address any new risks that have been introduced or discovered which could compromise the ability of your employees to carry out their work safely.
- ✓ If you are an employer you have a legal obligation to ensure the safety and security of your customers and employees. This obligation includes your risk assessment of a particular venue or event, to identify the need for any additional or refresher training that a door supervisor may require.
- ✓ The training that we require a licence holder to complete before we grant a licence is pitched at entry level. Individuals who have completed the training must still act in accordance with the same law on the use of force that applies to any private citizen.
- ✓ Additional training is available, and we encourage further training and on-the-job development. Individuals and security businesses can identify and risk assess whether further training is needed.
- ✓ Unsafe restraint techniques can lead to serious injury and even death – as in this case. Door supervisors must understand the legal impact of their actions, and the importance of using safe restraint methods. Staff need to communicate with anyone they are restraining both during and after an incident.



Further information available

Violence reduction guidance - We have a section on our website that features third party guidance on tackling and reducing work-related violence towards employees and businesses. It provides information on a wide range of possible control measures and good practice that other organisations have found effective. www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/violence-guidance

Work related violence toolkit - The Health and Safety Executive has worked with local authorities to reduce the risk of work-related violence in licensed or retail premises. Its toolkit provides practical advice on how to conduct a risk assessment and take action to prevent or control work-related violence. It contains information on a wide range of possible control measures and good practice that licensed and retail premises have found effective. www.hse.gov.uk/violence/toolkit/index.htm

Guidance for operatives – Credit card sized guide intended as a quick reminder for Door Supervision licence holders on the training in physical intervention that we require. www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/guides-for-operatives

A poster to help and remind security operatives, should necessary force be required, the correct way to carry out physical intervention. www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/guides-for-operatives