

Office Safety Fatality File

FLORIDA MAN GETS \$2.2M JUDGMENT AFTER CHAIR COLLAPSE

Florida residents are often hurt in public places, perhaps slipping and falling in stores and restaurants or even being injured in their own apartment buildings. Those facilities are not the only areas that can prove dangerous for innocent victims, as demonstrated by a recent ruling by the Florida Supreme Court.

The ruling reversed a previous decision that had revoked a \$2.2 million jury verdict that the victim received in the case. The victim in this case suffered serious personal injury after a chair collapsed while he was meeting with an attorney. Interestingly, the man had been seeking a personal injury lawyer for an unrelated case, but he ended up being injured by the piece of faulty furniture, recovering damages from the law firm instead.

Expert witnesses in the case said that all businesses with office furniture should inspect their chairs at least every six months. A casual inspection would likely have shown significant stress at a joint on the chair in question.

The case had been decided for the plaintiff, but an appeals court reversed that verdict later, after determining that causation was not demonstrated in the plaintiff's arguments. The Florida Supreme Court disagreed with that evaluation, instead deciding to emphasize the importance of the jury's evaluation of the incident. The jury determined that the law firm should pay about a third of the lawsuit's award, while the business that sold the chair is responsible for two-thirds of the damages.

In this case, the law firm was not found entirely liable for the man's injuries, but a jury found that the business's actions contributed to the victim's wounds. Still, the retailer was found negligent for failing to guarantee that its products were safe for

continued use.

Business owners of all persuasions are mandated by law to protect their patrons and workers. Victims who have been injured at any place of business may be entitled to financial compensation for their pain and suffering, medical costs, and other civil claims.