

BUSINESS MONTHLY



SECURITY breaches at Slough Trading Estate are at an all time low, thanks to Business Watch, an award-winning on-site security operation run by John Devine.

With only 10 burglaries reported in 2009, the location is one of the safest trading estates in the UK thanks, in the main, to the business, which won a national and regional gong in the British Security Industry Awards.

"Cameras enable us to spot the first signs of untoward activity and the benefit of being located on site means we can respond quickly to any incident," John says.

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Slough specialist sounds alarm over gate death



CLOSE CALL: Joe Baker of Atlas Group, on Slough Trading Estate, wants better safety precautions for the installation of automatic gates.

THE managing director of a specialist automatic gate installation business in Slough is sounding the alarm against "a bewildering array of conflicting regulations and lack of policing" of his industry which puts lives at risk.

Joe Baker, who runs Atlas Group in Plymouth Road, Slough Trading Estate, has written an open letter in his trade press as the first salvo in his fight against weak regulations which are "incomprehensible, unworkable and unenforceable".

He plans to contact the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament and take his views to Brussels, if necessary, in a bid to make homes, offices and factories safer.

He fears many installers flout the rules and get away with it because even health and safety officers and trading standards officers don't know the various safety rules and regulations relating to different aspects of installation and design.

His letter follows the ending of a court case involving the directors of a business

at the centre of a tragedy involving the death of a nine-year-old crushed by electronic gates at the entrance to his grandparents' home.

Mr Baker was "saddened and appalled" but not surprised by reports of the accident because of general confusion in the industry.

He was horrified when he read the first report about the circumstances leading up to the death of the child whose skull was crushed under one ton of pressure when his head became stuck in a large gap between the hinge of the 6ft gates and the concrete pillar when he reached through to open the gates to a block of luxury flats in Poole, Dorset.

Mr Baker's firm was not involved in the case but he wants to lift the lid on "a bewildering array of conflicting regulations and lack of policing".

"Without getting involved in the legalities of that particular case, which involves three firms whose directors appeared in court

recently, I am keen to highlight the bewildering array of conflicting regulations and lack of policing.

"I fear these add up to a recipe for an early repeat of the dreadful accident resulting in little Jason's untimely demise."

His letter states: "As an installer who regularly works on high profile public sector contracts, I am worried about cases such as this bringing my industry into disrepute and disarray.

"I thus intend bringing my fears to the attention of central government and, if necessary, the European courts."

The prosecution maintained that the gap in the gates should have been small enough to prevent a small boy squeezing through which was why the contractors were prosecuted under Health and Safety regulations.

"Curiously, the requirements of the various regulations were ignored in this case and I understand that the directors of the gate company were prosecuted simply because they failed to undertake a written risk assessment."

Mr Baker is demanding a general tightening up of the rules, greater awareness among the Health and Safety Executive and more training for installers, many of whom are ignorant of the risks.

Problems arise because gates and systems are covered by various rules and regulations instead of one straightforward law, and even health and safety officers are not acquainted with the specific segments of safety rules covering aspects of installation and gate design. They frequently work to a narrower aspect of Safety at Work regulations instead.

He is also concerned that no systems installed in the UK before 2008 comply with the existing regulations, because suitable testing equipment was not available until then.

"More seriously, the vast majority of systems installed since then, including those being installed now, do not comply because the regulations are largely ignored by installers, most of whom are semi-skilled and not required to undergo any form of training."

The necessary test equipment to confirm compliance costs several thousands of pounds which few installers possess — only a handful have been sold in the UK.

All systems have to be designed in conjunction with a formal assessment to identify and avoid traps, guard shear points and to protect against impact.

For more information contact Joe Baker on 01753 696166.



Entrepreneur brings leadership to crash scene

IAN Horler needed all his ingenuity and leadership skills when he found himself at the centre of a Maidenhead drama last week.

The entrepreneur, who took on the might of Express Dairies when he ran his own company Bucks Dairies as a teenager, needed every ounce of the courage which made him create the business as a 19-year-old after a car crashed into a gas main at Cannon Lane.

He thought for one dreadful moment that the vehicle was about to explode into a fireball and was still shaken days after the incident when he gave talks to young entrepreneurs like him and members of the BSL B2B business development group at Burnham.

He found it difficult to prepare for the talks as thoughts of the near death experience flashed into his brain.

"It has been very difficult for me to keep my thoughts together," said Mr Horler who played a major part in the rescue bid and keeping other motorists calm after the gas pipe was ruptured close to the railway.

The 43-year-old was attempting to save the driver while gas escaped from the broken pipe when he saw to his horror that smoke was rising from the wrecked car.

"I was told later that it was from the air bag explosion but at the time I thought the vehicle was about to burst into flames at any moment.

"It was a seriously scary moment," he said.

On the bright side, the father-of-two from High Wycombe who runs the award-winning Excel Office Supplies business has been explaining about his early beginnings in business to students attending a young entrepreneurs academy run by one of his customers, Peter Jones of Dragons' Den fame.

Mr Horler has become a regular at the new Bolton Services Limited (BSL) club which runs dinner and business building events at Grovefield House.

He was a guest presenter on Thursday following talks from Microsoft about 'Cloud Computing' and another talk on the value of social networking.

He is currently celebrating winning an account with Wycombe Wanderers which has needed his dogged determination to win the business.

Mr Horler didn't hesitate when the car needed moving despite the fear of explosion. "There are times when you have to focus on the positive and this was one of them."