

OTAS INSIGHT · CI-002

Taking it down safely: lessons from an event structure prosecution

Operational

Tactical

Strategic

By OTAS Insights · Published by OTAS Live Ltd · Great Britain (CDM 2015, PUWER and LOLER) **Correct as of 20 October 2026**

In July 2026 an event structure company and its director were sentenced after a worker suffered life-changing injuries while a temporary steel frame was being dismantled. A ratchet strap, not designed for lifting or lowering, was used to lower a steel beam of over 100kg. It failed and the beam fell on the worker [1]. The lessons for every crew are plain: plan and write down the dismantling, use lifting equipment for lifting, and stop when someone raises a concern [2][6][7].

Key takeaways

- **Dismantling is construction work.** CDM 2015 covers taking down temporary event structures, and the arrangements must be written down before the work begins [2][10].
- **The right kit.** Work equipment must only be used for operations it is suitable for. The strap in this case was not designed for lowering loads [1][6].
- **Lowering is a lifting operation.** It must be planned by a competent person, supervised and carried out safely [7].
- **Listen.** In this case the director carried on after the worker raised concerns [1].
- **Directors are personally liable.** The director was sentenced as well as the company [1][5].

What happened

HSE reports that on 26 June 2024 a worker for iSkate Limited, of St Ives, Cambridgeshire, was dismantling an internal steel beam temporary structure at a venue in Surrey. A ratchet strap was being used to lower a steel beam weighing over 100kg. The strap was not designed for lifting or lowering loads. It failed and the beam fell on the worker, who suffered multiple fractures to the back, a punctured lung and a broken leg [1].

HSE says the company's director was on site, made the decision to use the ratchet strap and instructed workers where to stand. He continued with the method after the worker raised concerns about whether it was safe [1]. HSE's investigation found the company had failed to ensure that the dismantling was properly planned and carried out safely [1].

The court outcome

At Guildford Magistrates' Court on 28 July 2026, the company pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 16(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015,

by virtue of regulation 20(1). It was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay £6,949 in costs [1]. The director pleaded guilty to an offence under section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and received a community order with 75 hours of unpaid work [1].

Why dismantling catches crews out

HSE guidance says CDM applies to building, fitting out and taking down temporary structures for events and productions, and that the build and takedown can be treated as one project [10]. The law says dismantling must be planned and carried out to prevent danger, and the arrangements must be recorded in writing before the work begins [2].

HSE research on temporary demountable structures found that "the deconstruction process is not simply a reversal of the construction process" [12]. It also found that time pressures in the events sector are inevitable, and said sufficient time and resources must be allocated at every stage [12]. The get out is often the most rushed part of a job. It needs its own plan.

The right equipment for the job

Employers must make sure work equipment is used only for operations, and under conditions, for which it is suitable [6]. A lifting operation means lifting or lowering a load, and every lifting operation involving lifting equipment must be properly planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out safely [7]. HSE says lifting equipment, including accessories, must be of adequate strength for the use, with an appropriate factor of safety [8].

When someone raises a concern

In this case HSE reports that the worker raised concerns and the method continued [1]. A concern from the person doing the work is information about the risk. Teams should consider making it normal to pause the job, look again and change the method.

What to do

Operational: riggers, crew and site staff

- Use lifting equipment and accessories for lifting and lowering, never load straps or improvised kit [1][6].
- Know the dismantling sequence before you start [2][9].
- Keep clear of any load being lifted or lowered.
- If you think a method is unsafe, say so and stop.

Tactical: crew chiefs, site and production managers

- Write the dismantling arrangements down before the get out begins [2][9].
- Have every lift planned by a competent person and supervised [7][8].
- Check the right lifting equipment is on site for the get out, not only the build [6][8].
- Treat a crew member's concern as a reason to stop and review.

Strategic: directors, production companies and clients

- Give the get out the same time and resources as the build [12].
- Make sure CDM duties are understood for build and takedown [10].
- Back supervisors who stop work to review a method.

- Remember that directors can be prosecuted personally [5].

Action box

Level	Do this
Operational	Right kit for lifting and lowering, know the sequence, keep clear of loads, speak up.
Tactical	Written dismantling arrangements, planned and supervised lifts, kit checked, concerns acted on.
Strategic	Time and resources for the get out, CDM understood, supervisors backed, personal liability understood.

Frequently asked questions

Does CDM 2015 apply to taking down event structures?

Yes. HSE says CDM applies to building, fitting out and taking down temporary structures for events and productions [10].

Do dismantling arrangements have to be written down?

Yes. The arrangements for demolition or dismantling must be recorded in writing before the work begins [2].

Can you use a ratchet strap to lower a load?

In this case HSE said the strap was not designed for lifting or lowering loads. Work equipment must only be used for operations it is suitable for [1][6].

Can a director be prosecuted personally?

Yes. Where a company's offence is committed with a director's consent or connivance, or is attributable to their neglect, the director is also guilty [5].

What happened in court?

The company was fined £12,000 with £6,949 costs, and the director received a community order with 75 hours of unpaid work [1].

What we don't know yet

Whether there will be any appeal. We found none on 20 October 2026. The full report sets out the other open points.

This Insight summarises a published HSE prosecution and the law in general terms. It is not legal advice. It reports the outcome as HSE published it and adds no findings of its own.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes EPGN, sells event operations services.

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Full report (PDF): <https://otas.live/insights/lifting-lessons-event-structure-prosecution/lifting-lessons-event-structure-prosecution-full-report.pdf>

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References

All web sources were opened and checked on 20 October 2026.

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