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Fears grow over glass falling from city buildings

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Exploding glass has been identified as an emerging risk in city buildings after two Melbourne balconies came crashing down, narrowly missing pedestrians in the street below.

Australian Window Association CEO Tracey Gramlick told insuranceNEWS.com.au a combination of non-conforming products imported from China and incorrect installation has created "a recipe for disaster".

She believes the threat has been overshadowed by other issues involving defective imported building products such as electrical cables and flammable cladding, but warns fatalities could result.

"I have asked a politician, 'How many bodies do you want before something gets done?'

"Glass can kill – that is what people need to understand. Broken glass and arteries do not mix."

Property services company Roscon is investigating what caused two balconies on a Melbourne apartment building to spontaneously shatter.

National GM Sahil Bhasin told insuranceNEWS.com.au the problem lies with mid-tier developers ordering Chinese glass that is not tested to Australian standards.

He says toughened glass contains nickel sulphide, which can break under some circumstances, such as through heat stress. It should be heat-soaked to ensure long-term strength.

He says many Chinese companies sell glass that is certified as heat-soaked, but it is not.

"This is a huge problem and will only get worse as these products keep coming in," he said.

"If we are to keep ordering these products from overseas then there needs to be an audit, or even CCTV to monitor the heat-soaking process."

Ms Gramlick says many glass failures go unreported, and the biggest growing problem is incorrect installation.

"If glass is not handled correctly and installed correctly, then it is almost a matter of time before something goes wrong," she said. "Our industry needs to keep banging away at governments and surveyors to make sure someone is held accountable when this happens.

"The focus has been lost on this particular issue."

The Victorian Building Authority told insuranceNEWS.com.au the issue does not fall under its jurisdiction, and the Australian Building Codes Board says it is not aware of the problem.

See [other story](#).

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