

tized and afraid to leave home.

In the appeal ruling released on March 2, Justice Paul Rouleau, speaking unanimously for the three-member appeal court, dismissed Weig's argument that the initial trial judge had not properly addressed the jury with regards to what is an appropriate reward in a sexual assault case and failed to mention incidents in Bibik's history, which Weig argued would have impacted her mental well-being and reduced his responsibility for damages.

Stating that most damages as a result of sexually assaulting an adult range between \$75,000 and \$125,000, Weig had argued that the \$300,000 in general damages was "grossly disproportionate." In response, Rouleau said "there is no doubt that the jury's award for general damages was high and outside of the generally expected range," but it was not so unreasonable that another jury could not have reached the same amount.

Because of Weig's high degree of control over the sales team, previous history of violence against another employee and the lack of a formal complaint mechanism in the company to deal with harassment and abuse in the workplace, "both the trial judge and the jury found that the employer should be held liable as well," Kozen says. He adds that Bibik can pursue payment in full from either party or a combination of the two.

Deluxe Windows has since filed a cross-claim against Weig, seeking full payment of any money it has to pay the plaintiff, which is likely to be successful, Kozen suggests. "Our client is just happy to get through eight years of litigation proceedings at this point. She's more relieved than anything else."

Greg Burchell is editorial assistant of OHS CANADA.

## Feeling frustrated at work? Get a room and go postal

By Samuel Dunsiger

**T**his may not be your idea of how an anger management session should look like, but a company down south has offered those who have had a bad day at work an alternative to defuse that explosive emotion.

For a fee, patrons with a beef can let it all out at The Anger Room in Dallas where they can hurl and smash objects from telephones to lamps, computers and sofas. Owner Donna Alexander says the genesis of the business idea stemmed from her experience as a former call-centre employee. "I've had my fair share of stresses at work. It was something that continuously stayed on my mind," she says.

Alexander's clients, who come from all walks of life, cite poor workplace relations, job stress and familial issues as stressors. "It's really more of workout," she says. "It keeps them from bottling it up and allows them to act it out in a safe way." For protection, clients are provided with hard hats,

masks, coveralls and gloves, Alexander says.

But Jackie Ralph, human resources manager for Homes by Avi, a home-building company in Edmonton, thinks physically acting out is not a constructive way to manage anger arising from workplace stress. "As a manager, I would keep a close eye on those employees who might choose this outlet on a regular basis, as there may be underlying issues that they are not dealing with," Ralph says.

It could also be interpreted as a signal that the worker may not be the right fit if the individual cannot handle the difficult situation that comes along with the job, she adds.

Frontline workers, such as customer service representatives, call centre employees and those who work in retail and hospitality sectors, are among those most likely to experience work-related frustration, suggests Julianna Cantwell, president of JUNA Consulting Inc., a human resources consulting firm in Edmonton.

These workers are often not provided with training on how to deal with negative emotions arising

from their jobs. "What's important is that people are taught how to properly perceive a situation and manage their emotions around it so they don't get overwhelmed," Cantwell says.

A review article published February, 2012 in a journal of the Association for Psychological Science in Washington, D.C. found that people who practice self-control manage their aggression better. Experimental evidence also demonstrates that self-control failures frequently predict aggression. "If you give aggressive people the opportunity to improve their self-control, they are less aggressive," Thomas Denson, a psychologist at the University of New South Wales in Australia, says in a statement in March.

Cantwell recommends coping measures such as going for a walk or taking a nap. Some companies also provide gym memberships, counselling and staff rooms with couches and televisions for those who need some time out during work hours. Providing training to staff on how to deal with difficult customers and not take things personally is also important, Cantwell adds.

Employers who recognize the unique challenges presented in certain occupations have an advantage when offering training and support systems for their employees. Cantwell cites one of her clients who specializes in home improvement and renovation. "Out in their lumber yard, they have something called 'hammer time' where they can destroy things with hammers."

For Ralph, encouraging staff to take a breather and offering a listening ear to help resolve stressful situations is the way to go. "Managers who recognize that employees sometimes just need some alone time will groom strong, empowered staff," she says.

Samuel Dunsiger is a writer in Toronto.

